

THE FIVE CENT

WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1879, by FRANK TOUSEY, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

Entered at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., as Second Class Matter.

Vol. I { COMPLETE. }

FRANK TOUSLY, PUBLISHER, 18 ROSE STREET, N. Y.
March 26, 1879.

Subscription Price \$2.50 per year.

{ PRICE
5 CENTS. }

No. 87

DICK LIGHTHEART IN LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

COUNTING-HOUSE SQUARE.

"Lond' Bridge! Lond' Bridge! Any luggage, sir? Want a cab, please?"

"Luggage under the seat," said Dick Lighthouse. "Lots of rugs and things. Catch hold."

A bundle of rugs and a couple of hat-boxes, followed by a fishing-rod, an umbrella, and a walking-stick, fell about the porter's head.

He grew bewildered.

"Not so fast, sir," he cried. "I say, sir!"

"Couldn't have done it cleaner if he'd been a post or pillar-box," he observed.

The porter got up and said, with a comical look:

"When you young gents has done having larks with me, perhaps you won't mind saying so."

"All right," answered Dick. "The show's



Lord Borrowdale struggled to retain his hold on the roof, but failing in that, toppled over backwards.

The Brighton train had just come puffing and panting into the station, as if it had overworked itself.

A porter was addressing two young gentlemen in a first-class carriage.

The young gentlemen in question were, as tickets on their hat-boxes indicated, Mr. Richard Lighthouse and Mr. Henry Messiter, passengers for London.

"Mind your eye," exclaimed Dick. "That's a topper."

A carpet-bag descended on the porter's head, causing him to fall on one knee like a tired camel.

Dick jumped out of the carriage.

Putting his hands on the porter's back, and saying, "Tuck in your Jemmy, old son," he, much to Messiter's delight, sprang lightly over.

closed. No more money taken at the door. Ring up the curtain, and turn the gas full on for the representation of the grand new drama.

"What's that called, sir?" asked the porter, picking up the luggage.

"The Larks of Dick Lighthouse; or, the Scapegrace of London. There's half-a-crown for you. Catch! go and have a bob's worth."

"Where, sir?"

"Where?" repeated Dick, tapping his forehead.

"What theater is it at, sir?"

"Oh, ah, yes, of course. It is at the Theater Royal Bamboozlem."

"Never heard on that theayter, sir," said the porter, with a puzzled look.

"I should think there was a good many things you've never heard of. But the 'Bam', they always call it the 'Bam' for short, is down city way somewhere."

"Pile it up, Dick," whispered Messiter.

"Haven't I piled it up as high as the monument already?" replied Dick, with an injured air.

"Thank you kindly, sir," said the porter, "I'll try and get an evening off and run down to the 'Bam' to see Lightheart's larks. Did you say a cab, sir?"

"Yes."

"Four-wheeler or Hansom, sir?"

"Oh, a shofie. Can't stand a growler," said Dick.

The porter called a Hansom, stowed the portmanteaux and other luggage as well as he could, and was about to step out, when Dick shut the door, and cried:

"Right, go to Bedlam."

The cabman stared, but fancying his fare was inside, whipped up his horse, and started down the station at a good pace.

He fancied his fare might be a doctor connected with Bethlehem or Bedlam Hospital, or he might be a visitor.

When the porter found himself being driven off, he howled and shouted, but without attracting the driver's attention.

At last he thought of the trap-door in the roof of the cab.

This he pushed up.

"Hi! Wo!" he cried. "This won't do. I'm a porter. What are you up to? Wo! stoopid. You've left your fare on the platform."

"Wot?" roared the cabman.

"I'm only the porter."

"Somebody said 'Bedlam,' and I'm blessef if I don't think you're more'n half crazy."

As he spoke he turned back, and down again to the platform, though he had to go round a long way, as cabs entering come in by a different gate.

Dick and Messiter were laughing heartily.

"What do you mean by this?" asked Dick, trying to look stern.

"By what, sir?" inquired the astonished porter.

"Why? You're a nice chap to run off with my luggage; I've a good mind to give you in charge."

"You're a playful young gent, you is," said the porter, grinning.

"Touch your cap respectfully, and shut that mince pie and sausage trap of yours," said Dick.

"Yes, sir."

"I've been giving you a dress rehearsal of Lightheart's Larks. Jump in, Harry."

Messiter entered the cab, Dick followed him, and they left the porter staring after them and scratching his head, as if it wanted a little delicate attention of that sort.

"Drive to No. 1 Selina Villas, Camden Town, cabby," said Dick, as they got out of the station.

Away rattled the dashing Hansom over the stones of the Borough, away it glided over the asphalt of the city.

"By Jove, London's a fine place," said Messiter.

"Yes. It's a two-horse sort of location," said Dick, who shared his companion's admiration for the first city in the world.

"I wonder if we shall like our lodgings," said Messiter.

"Can't tell," said Dick; "the governor answered the advertisement and took them for us. Two bedrooms, a sitting room on the first floor, a pound a week, with cooking and attendance. It isn't dear."

"No, but we shall have to look after the coin," said Messiter. "We enter Golding Brothers, at seventy pounds a year."

"With the prospect of a rise."

"Yes. A rise on the screw at the end of twelve months, if we're worth it."

"It's not bad for youngsters," remarked Dick; "I like the idea of getting my own living."

"So do I. Anything's better than staying at home with a lot of sugar-and-spice girls."

"Sugar-and-spice girls are rather nice in their way," said Dick, thinking of his sweetheart, Henrietta.

"What's the odds, we don't get the sack in three months?" hazarded Messiter.

"I shouldn't like to bet against it," replied Dick, with a laugh.

"But we'll try and get our names up for steady men, shall we?" said Messiter, earnestly.

"I mean to be awfully steady," replied Dick.

He meant it, too, at the time he said it. So did Messiter. They were about to make a start in the world.

Mr. Lightheart had advanced them enough money to carry them through the first quarter. He had by letter taken apartments for them in Camden town. They arrived in London on the afternoon of Friday. On Saturday morning, they were to report themselves at the office of Golding Brothers, in Counting-house Square, City, and on Monday they would begin work in earnest.

Suddenly the cab was pulled up with a jerk, the driver jumped down, and began to pull violently at a bell-handle at the bottom of a small garden, which led up to a neat little house.

"Is this No. 1 Selina Villas?" asked Dick.

"Yes, sir."

"Rouse them up."

"It's all very well," said the cabman. "But it's my private opinion, this 'ere bell don't ring."

"Why not?"

"Somebody's been and tampered with the wire."

The form of a young man appeared on the doorstep, and he looked down the garden path. He was tall and thin, with a merry twinkle in his eye, and a quick, sharp manner about him.

"Pull away, jarvey," he exclaimed. "I hope you like it."

"Like what?" asked the cabman, gruffly.

"It's pleasant exercise, ain't it?"

The man gave a prodigious tug at the handle, and it came off in his hand.

"You've done it now. That's a bob out of you. Number 789. Good. I'll give old Caxey your number, and she'll summon you for the bell-handle as safe as houses."

"Don't you go a-taking my number," said the cabman, angrily.

"It's a bob up your back, I tell you," exclaimed the tall, thin young man.

He seemed to enjoy the joke immensely.

"I say," said Dick, "why won't this jolly old bell ring?"

"Oh! I stopped that abomination long ago. I cut it."

"Do you lodge here?"

"Yes, I've got the parlors. My name is Tom Cooper. I'm a sawbones."

"A what?"

"A medical student, and you're the two new lodgers that old Caxey expects."

"We are new lodgers, we've taken the first floor; but who's old Caxey?"

"Our landlady. You'll soon know who and what old Caxey is. Don't you leave any lush about, or weeds, for she blows her bacca on the quiet."

Dick laughed.

"Do you mind letting us in?" he said, "as the bell is broken and we can't make the landlady hear."

"Push the gate, it ain't locked," said Mr. Tom Cooper.

"Oh, I see."

"Old Caxey used to lock the gate, and make me climb over when I came home about milk-time in the morning."

"Did she?"

"Rather, but I stopped her. I broke two

blades of an old knife in the lock, and it's never worked since. Old Caxey hates me like steam. I think she'd murder me if she wasn't afraid of me," said Cooper.

Dick pushed the gate open, and followed by Messiter and the cabman, who carried the luggage, walked up the little garden.

A few lilacs, laburnums, roses, and a patch or two of flowers, with some ivy and virginia creepers on the walls, all looking very wild and uncared for, met the eye.

"Rather stony," remarked Dick.

"Well, yes," answered Cooper. "Old Caxey used to take a pride in her garden, but she don't now."

"Oh!"

"I settled her gardening a year ago. She's never touched it since she dug up half a corpse instead of a variegated tulip."

"Half a what?"

"Some cold meat. What we call a subject at the hospital. I often bring home a leg or a head when I can afford it, though skulls cost money, and when I've done with them, I bury them in the garden, and that's what licks old Caxey. Don't she hate me just, that's all."

Mr. Tom Cooper rubbed his hands gleefully. He seemed to be awfully proud of his landlady's dislike. It was the one thing which made his life especially agreeable to him.

"But you want to be shown to your rooms, don't you?" he went on.

"If you please," replied Dick.

"Right. I'll give her a hail. She's mugging herself down stairs, I'll bet."

He went to the top of the kitchen stairs, and putting his hand to his mouth, shouted:

"Caxey! Here's the turncock come to break up the road, and cut your water off, because you haven't paid the last three quarters' rate."

There was a shuffling on the stairs.

A stout, middle-aged, red-faced woman made her appearance.

"It's a crying shame, Mr. Cooper," she said, "that a poor lone widow woman can't have no peace of her life through your goings on."

"Pay your water-rate."

"If you'd pay me up like a gentleman, and not keep putting me off."

"Caxey," interrupted the student, holding up his finger warningly.

"I will speak, and I say it's"—

Mr. Cooper suddenly vanished, and the slamming of the door indicated that he had shut himself in his own apartments to silence any further revelations of the landlady before the new-comers.

Mrs. Caxey was not slow in discovering Dick and Messiter.

With many apologies for not having seen them before, she conducted them to their apartments.

The luggage was safely stowed, the cabman paid, and ordering some tea and muffins, with a few watercresses, they sat down in their rather shabbily furnished room and looked around them.

"Landed," exclaimed Dick.

"Rather dull," said Messiter; "what shall we do with ourselves?"

"Tell you what we'll do," said Dick; "after tea we'll wander down to the city, and see what our office looks like by gaslight. It's dark at seven now, and winter's coming on."

"I don't mind. I'll do anything you like, old fellow."

"That's settled then," replied Dick.

After tea they put on their hats, and quitted the house without seeing any one.

They walked down the road which was not far from the well-known "Britannia" tavern, carefully looking about them so as to be able to find their way again, and 'bussed it to the city.

By dint of inquiry, they found Counting-house Square, which consisted of tall, gloomy, smoke-begrimed houses.

It was silent and deserted now.

Eight o'clock had struck, and all the clerks had gone home long ago.

By the aid of a friendly gas lamp they saw

on a door-plate the name of their respected employers—Golding Brothers.

A thick fog was rapidly rising within the precincts of the city.

Dick and Messiter, having satisfied their curiosity, were about to withdraw.

All at once a man, apparently about sixty, walked quickly to the house of Golding Brothers.

He thumped with his knuckles and kicked at the door.

There was no reply.

"Too late," he said aloud, in a tone of vexation; "I was afraid of it."

Just at the same moment, two shadowy forms emerged from the neighboring doorway, where they appeared to have concealed themselves. They glided through the thickening fog towards the first-comer.

"Look," whispered Messiter; "what are those men going to do?"

"Not knowing, can't tell," replied Dick, dryly.

Suddenly the two men fell upon the first one. They beat him on the head, and bore him to the ground. One knelt down and rifled his pockets while the other kept watch.

"Murder!" cried Dick under his breath.

He rushed forward and seized the man who was watching, catching him by the throat. But the fellow was powerful, and he shook the lad off easily.

Dick fell heavily on the stones with which the square was paved. In falling, however, he got a glimpse—only a glimpse—of the man's face.

"Guy," cried the ruffian.

"Right. I've got the sugar," answered his companion.

Before Dick could recover himself, the cowardly thieves had disappeared in the thickening fog.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE OFFICE.

For a moment the boys stood aghast at what had happened. It had been done so suddenly. Scarcely a minute seemed to have elapsed since the stranger knocked at Golding's door.

Dick advanced to the body, and bending gently over it he said:

"Are you much hurt?"

A deep groan was the only reply.

"Stay! I will call a policeman, and have you taken to a doctor," cried Dick.

The injured man appeared to hear these words.

His eyes opened as he feebly moved his hand.

"It is useless," he said.

"Useless!" repeated Dick.

"Yes; I am mortally wounded."

"Where?"

"The coward stabbed me when I was down. It will soon be over."

"What can I do for you?"

"It is only a just punishment," muttered the man, talking as if to himself.

"What is just?" asked Dick.

"My death. I have helped his lordship to rob orphans of their inheritance."

"Tell me all about it."

"I will, I will, if I have strength."

He breathed heavily, and seemed to have a difficulty in speaking.

"Go on, for heaven's sake," said Dick.

"Give me time."

"If you have done wrong, you should try and rectify it before you die."

"Oh, yes, it is too true."

There was another pause.

"I am listening," said Dick.

"Tell Little Sunshine that he is not my son," said the man, whose mind appeared to be wandering.

"Whose son is he?"

"He and Flossy are both Lord Claude's children."

"Go on."

"I stole them when the mother died, so that Lord Claude's brother might come in to the title and property."

"Where is the proof of this?" asked Dick.

"All the papers are in—in the old house."

"Where?"

"In the old house in the Borough."

"Who are you?" cried Dick, who was more bewildered than enlightened by what he heard.

"I've done my duty to my employer. Tell him the thieves took the money. His money."

The life was ebbing fast. In a few minutes all would be over.

Dick saw this, and in a frenzy of excitement he exclaimed:

"Speak more plainly. It will be too late directly!"

"Too late, too late," repeated the murdered man.

"For heaven's sake speak," urged Dick.

"See justice done."

"I will if you will tell me all."

"Little Sunshine."

"Yes, yes. You said that before."

"Not my son, he is Lord"—

"Lord who?" asked Dick, beside himself with impatience.

"Little Flossy—little milliner—his sister—find papers—all proofs in old house. See justice done—not my fault—all over—game's up at last—Lord receive—my—my soul."

Those were his last words. His eyes closed in death, and the next moment he was a corpse.

"This is a nice mystery," remarked Messiter.

"Yes; and a nice mess to get into," replied Dick.

The measured tread of a policeman was heard coming up Counting-house Square.

"Help, help!" exclaimed Dick.

"Who calls?" asked the policeman.

"I do."

"What is it?"

"Murder."

Hearing this the constable shuffled along through the fog at a quicker pace.

Dick related what had happened, whereat the policeman sent a passing boy to the nearest police-station for a stretcher and assistance.

The body was ultimately conveyed to Leman Street, Whitechapel. When the divisional surgeon saw it, he pronounced life to be extinct some time. It was then taken to the dead-house and left to await an inquest. The boys gave their evidence to the inspector on duty, who took down their names and addresses.

It was ten o'clock before they reached home. A vigorous knock at the door brought out Mrs. Caxey, holding a candle in her hand. Dick had arranged with Messiter that nothing should be said to her of the murder.

"You are two good young gentlemen to come home so early," she cried, as she ushered them into their apartment, and lighted the candles on the table.

"What about a latch key, Mrs. Caxey?" said Dick.

"I've got one for each of you," she answered. "They're on the mantelpiece, for I can't abide being knocked up out of my warm bed in the middle of the night, though Mr. Cooper, drat him, has done it with thieves and fire many a time."

"He seems to be rather of a playful disposition."

"Raythur playful! He's a himp, that's what he is."

"Why don't you get rid of him?"

"I should like to see the lone woman as could. I've given him notice scores of times, and he only laughs, saying, 'When I want to go, Caxey, I'll let you know. Very comfortable, thank you, barring the rats!' Oh, he's a limb, he is!"

"Is he out?" asked Messiter.

"Out! yes, he's always out, prowling about o' nights like a bat or a howl!"

"Well, we won't keep you up, Mrs. Caxey."

"Is there anything you want, gentlemen? Don't be afraid to ask, for though I wouldn't stir a finger for Mr. Cooper, I'd run my legs off for those as is civil, and knows how to behave themselves."

"Nothing to-night, thanks. Let us have breakfast at eight every morning. Eggs and watercresses or a rasher of bacon, you know."

"Yes, sir."

"And I'm rather particular about the tea. None of your two-shilling sweepings, please, and don't forget a dash of green."

Mrs. Caxey, having received her instructions, wished her new lodgers good-night, and went away, leaving a strong smell of rum behind her.

The boys went to bed, and the next morning were at the office punctually at ten.

Mr. Steadyman, the chief clerk, received them kindly, and showed them two desks, which were in future to be theirs.

"This is Mr. Harry Wilding," said Mr. Steadyman, pointing to a young, fashionably-dressed man, who was sucking the end of a pen.

Dick and Messiter bowed. Mr. Wilding nodded and surveyed them curiously through an eye-glass.

"That is Mr. Jeremiah Darke," said Mr. Steadyman, pointing with his spectacles in another direction.

Dick bowed again to a tall and painfully thin, white-looking individual of thirty.

"That is George Barclay, a youth whose father is one of our travelers," concluded the chief clerk. "And now you know all in your room. With the other clerks in the outer office and warehouse you will make acquaintance in due course, I do not doubt. And now I shall leave you to shake down, as they say."

Readjusting his spectacles, and smoothing his iron-gray hair, the head clerk coughed twice and left them.

"So you're the new clerks," exclaimed Harry Wilding, when the door shut.

"We is," said Messiter.

"I should say 'we are,'" answered Wilding.

"That, however, is a matter of taste. Jerry Darke, go on with your work, sir, and try not to look so much like a boiled ghost, if you please," he added to the other clerk.

Mr. Jeremiah Darke's pen traveled quickly over the paper.

"Little Sunshine," continued Wilding, "go and ask Mr. Steadyman for a loan of the paper. I want to see about the murder in our square."

The youth whom Mr. Steadyman had pointed out as George Barclay got up.

He was a pretty, fair-haired boy, with an innocent, good-natured, beaming sort of face, which you could not dislike.

"I beg your pardon," said Dick; "did you say little Sunshine?"

"I did."

"Is that a name for George Barclay?"

"It is what we have always called him," replied Wilding.

Messiter and Dick looked at one another significantly.

The murdered man had spoken of Little Sunshine, and hinted that he was the real heir to a peerage, though he had spoken so strangely that he had not left much behind him to prove it.

The boy returned with the morning paper, which contained an account of the finding of the body in Counting-house Square by the police constable.

It added that detectives were at work, and it was believed they had a clew to the perpetrators of this unparalleled outrage.

Little Sunshine's face was beaming with more than its usual pleasantness.

"Mr. Steadyman says I may go as soon as father comes," he exclaimed.

"It's a bad thing to encourage yourself to knock off before the usual time," said Mr. Wilding.

"But it's Saturday

"So it is. I'm glad of it for one," observed Jerry Darke.

"Who spoke to you?" said Wilding.

It was evident that Mr. Wilding was a bit of a bully in his way, and that, being the head of his room, he thought himself privileged to make a butt of Mr. Darke.

"Do you expect your father to-day?" asked Dick.

"Yes; he's been in the country, collecting for the firm, and he ought to have been back yesterday."

"Did he write and say so?"

"Mr. John Golding got a letter stating that he should be at the office on Friday before bank time, so as to be able to pay in nearly five hundred pounds he had with him, but I suppose something has kept him," said Little Sunshine.

"Do you mind taking a stroll with me for half-an-hour?" said Dick.

"No, if I may go."

"I want to be shown round the city, just to know the ropes, as the sailors say."

Little Sunshine looked inquiringly at Wilding.

"Out along, young 'un, if Mr. Lightheart and Mr. Messiter want you," said Wilding.

Dick thanked him.

They went out together, saying they should not be long.

"Look here, Dick," said Messiter, in a whisper, "is it right?"

"He must know it, sooner or later."

"But he's so young, and looks so happy."

"It is best that he should know it, and he can identify the body."

"What an awful thing for him, poor boy."

"It may be the making of his fortune; who can tell?" answered Dick.

"Which way are you going, sir?" inquired Sunshine.

"We will get into this cab. I want to make a call first," said Dick.

He stopped a four-wheeler, and all of them got in.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEAD-HOUSE.

TELLING the cabman to go to the police-station, Dick went in and had a long talk with the inspector.

The result of this was that the inspector came out, gave the driver fresh directions, and took a seat in the cab.

For some time they proceeded in silence. Then the cab stopped near the railings of a churchyard. Just inside the railings, and under the shadow of the church itself was a small, long, narrow shed. This was the dead-house.

Little Sunshine began to grow uneasy.

"Where are you taking me, Mr. Lightheart, please?" he asked.

"Your father is not—not very well, my little man," said the inspector.

"What is the matter with him?" cried Sunshine, his face clouding over.

"You will see presently."

"Oh, take me to him, please, please do."

"I am going to."

The inspector helped the boy out of the cab; the others followed.

Unlocking first some gates, and then the door of the dead-house itself, he took Sunshine by the hand.

"You must be a brave little boy," he said.

Sunshine wanted to ask him what for, but he felt so frightened he could not speak.

The light streamed into the rude brick-built shed, and revealed a pallid form lying upon a wooden trestle.

"Look at that face," said the inspector.

The boy was obliged to stand on tip-toe to be able to do so.

Then he uttered a piercing cry.

"Oh, father, father!" he cried, in piteous accents. "Speak to me, father."

The little fellow fell on his knees before the

dead body. He held up his hands piteously. Tears fell in a shower from his eyes, and his lips moved as if he were praying to heaven for power to bear this heavy stroke.

The inspector laid his hand pityingly on his head.

"Your father will never speak again, poor child," he replied.

"Is he dead, sir?" asked the boy in a dazed manner.

"He is."

"How did he die?"

"He was murdered."

At this Little Sunshine felt his head grow dizzy. A mist swam before his eyes, and all seemed to fade away like a dissolving view. He would have fallen, had not the inspector caught him and carried him out to the cab, where he placed him on the seat.

Dick and Messiter in the meantime entered the dead-house.

With awe-struck countenances they stood regarding the corpse.

They had seen death before.

But somehow this murdered man in the city dead-house seemed more awful to them than anything they had previously witnessed.

CHAPTER IV.

ALWAYS PROTECT A LADY

WHEN they got back to the office the inspector and the boys asked to see Mr. Golding.

John Golding, Senior, the partner with whom Dick had made acquaintance at Brighton, was in his private room.

His brother William Golding, did not happen to be in town that day.

Mr. John Golding had the party shown into his private room.

Little Sunshine was weeping bitterly.

With the utmost astonishment the senior partner in the famous firm of Golding Brothers listened to the story of the murder, and the identification of the victim with George Barclay, his traveler.

He had suffered a heavy loss. George Barclay had in his possession over five hundred pounds, the property of Golding Brothers. This had been carried off by the thieves, for nothing was found on the body. Not even a scrap of paper to show who he was.

"Let me question the boy," said Mr. Golding, when he had heard all.

The lad was put forward.

"Where do you live, Barclay?"

"In Victoria Street, Bow, sir."

"Have you got any friends?"

"No, sir. Now father is dead, I haven't," said Little Sunshine, sobbing as if his heart would break.

"Not one?"

"Only the landlady of the house, sir; and the neighbors, they all like me, sir, and wouldn't let me starve."

"Humph! Did you pay any attention to what Mr. Lightheart said?"

"About what, sir?"

"The last words of my traveler Barclay."

"About not being his son, sir, and the heir to a peerage, and papers to prove it in the old house in the Borough, and Flossy, my sister, and being both the stolen children of Lord Claude, sir?" asked the boy.

"That is what it amounts to," said Mr. Golding.

"Yes, sir, I heard that; but please, sir, I'd rather he'd been my father, because he was always so kind to me."

Poor Sunshine burst out crying again.

Looking around him with an air of conscious pride, Mr. John Golding cleared his throat with a preliminary:

"Ahem!"

"I have been called a hard man of business," he said, "and I may have deserved it, because in business there can be no friendship. To show I have a heart which can sympathize with misfortune, I declare my intention of adopting this poor, bereaved child, this tender

orphan, this—er—this blighted bud in the teeming garden of humanity."

After this speech he took out his handkerchief, and mopped his commercial brow.

"He wouldn't do it" whispered Dick to Messiter, "if he didn't think he'd be proved a lord some day."

"Not he, trust him," cried Messiter in the same tone.

"Barclay," said Golding, "I'll be a father to you."

Little Sunshine did not seem to appreciate the offer at its proper value.

For he continued to sob and show symptoms of the most violent grief.

"Thank the gentleman. Where's your gratitude?" said the inspector.

"Thank you, sir," said Little Sunshine.

"That's a good boy," said Mr. Golding, patting his head as if he had been a poodle pup.

"May I go and sit somewhere all alone and think about it all? I shall be better when I can make it out to be real," asked Sunshine.

"Stay here. No one comes into my private room."

"Are you going out, sir?"

"Yes, I must go on 'Change for half an hour."

"Thank you, sir."

"Lightheart and Messiter can go. They will not be required until ten o'clock on Monday morning."

Thus dismissed, the two indicated bowed and quitted the office in Counting-house Square.

"Mr. Inspector," said the great merchant.

"At your service, sir."

"Here is a little acknowledgment of your services."

I was a ten-pound bank note.

They quitted the office together, leaving Little Sunshine to cry all alone, and try to make out the reality of the terrible affliction which had fallen upon his young heart.

Dick and Messiter walked along arm-in-arm.

"We've tumbled into a new excitement," observed Dick.

"I wonder what the end of it will be?" said Messiter.

"It will be strange if Little Sunshine should turn out Lord Somebody."

"Stranger things than that have happened."

"There's a pretty girl going down that street," said Dick.

"She looks cross," replied Messiter.

"No wonder. There is some fellow following her. Look! he keeps on talking and she won't answer him. He is not a gentleman or he wouldn't do it."

"Give him a prop," said Messiter.

"Shall I prop him?"

"If you don't, I will; he's rasher too big for me, but I think you could tackle him."

Dick walked quickly down a side street, turning out of Cheapside.

The pretty girl in question was young and modestly dressed, with taste and yet inexpensively. In fact she was being followed and persecuted by a fast-looking man, who insisted upon paying his attentions, which she did not encourage.

Touching the man on the shoulder, Dick said:

"Do you know that lady?"

The man turned sharply round.

"What's that to you?" he asked.

The girl stopped on hearing an altercation.

"Excuse me, miss," said Dick, "but do you mind telling me whether this fellow is annoying you or not?"

"Yes, he is," was the reply; "I don't want to have anything to say to him, and he won't let me alone."

"Now look here, Mr. Juggins, or whatever your name may be, I've got a word of advice to give you."

"What's that, you half-starved young quill-driver?"

"Take your hook."

"For you? No, not for a dozen like you," said the man, angrily.

"Here's a bobby, look out," said Messiter.

"Call him up. I should say this fellow was known to the police," said Dick.

The man cast a hurried glance over his shoulder, and seeing that a policeman was actually approaching, lowered his tone.

"I'll mark you for this another time, my beauty," he said; "and when next you meet Bob Smash, you'll remember it."

Shaking his fist, he walked rapidly away.

"I've seen his face somewhere before," mused Dick.

"Where?" inquired Messiter.

"He's like the man who bent over the murdered man last night and robbed him."

"Nonsense."

"He is, though. What did he call himself?"

"Bob Smash."

"I shall think of that," said Dick, gravely.

The girl touched Dick with her parasol, saying:

"Will you allow me to thank you for your brave interference?"

"Don't mention it."

"It is not the first time that man has insulted me."

"The cowardly hound," replied Dick; "if it had not been for the bobby I'd have thrashed him within an inch of his life, or he should me."

"He knows that I am engaged by a firm in this street, and that I come to be paid every Saturday."

"What is your name, may I ask?" said Dick.

"Floss Silk. They call me Flossy."

"Flossy," repeated Dick, thinking of George Barclay's incoherent utterances in Counting-house Square.

"Yes. It's a funny name, isn't it?"

"You're an orphan, I know you are," answered Dick.

"I am."

"And you're a little milliner?"

"Yes."

"Did you know George Barclay?"

The girl shook her head.

"Or Little Sunshine?"

"No. Jenny Cotton and I live together and work together. Jenny's mother found me in the street when I was a child, and when Jenny's mother died, she and I set up housekeeping together."

"And where do you live?"

"That's telling," replied the girl, with a smile.

"Do tell me."

"Why should I?"

"Because I want you to."

"That's no reason at all. I never give gentlemen my address. Good-bye, many thanks; perhaps we shall meet again."

Floss Silk tripped lightly away.

"Spot her," cried Dick. "I must know where she lives. She's Little Sunshine's sister, or the daughter of Lord Claude."

"Bosh," said Messiter; "I don't believe the poor man knew what he was talking about."

"Oh, yes, he did. Why, where's she gone? Hang me, if I haven't missed her! Can you see her?"

"No. She's done a shunt into one of these warehouses."

"But which one?"

"Haven't the remotest idea. Come along. If you go thinking every milliner is a peeress, you'll be off your nut in a month," said Messiter.

He took Dick's arm, and the latter reluctantly allowed himself to be drawn from the spot.

"Let's come here again next Saturday, and we may see her," said Messiter.

"Do you take an interest in her?" asked Dick.

"I don't mind admitting that she isn't half bad-looking."

"Don't get red over it," Dick said, with a laugh.

"Oh, bother," answered Messiter. "Come in somewhere, and I'll fly you for a couple of beers."

"All right. Slope into the first pub. I could struggle with some malt," replied Dick.

They slaked their thirst, and taking a 'bus, went home, where Mrs. Caxey had prepared them what she called a nice little dinner, consisting of a roast fowl, and bacon, with an apple tart to follow.

"Old Caxey can do it," observed Messiter, "and I don't think she's such a bad sort as Tom Cooper makes her out."

"We shall see if we live long enough," replied Dick.

That evening they stopped at home, and the next day being Sunday, they went to church and mooned about the Regent's Park.

On Monday they were to go to the office in Counting-house Square to begin work in earnest.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOLD WARRIOR.

ON Monday morning the two young clerks presented themselves at the office as fresh as paint.

It wanted ten minutes to ten.

The door of the office of Golding Brothers was not yet open. Mr. Steadyman always carried the key, and had not yet arrived. Ten o'clock was the hour for the commencement of business.

In Counting-house Square they saw a commissioner—a bronzed veteran, who wore on his breast medals for Alma, Inkerman, and Sebastopol. In addition to this he had medals for Lucknow and Delhi.

His left arm was gone. It had been shot off by the Sepoys during the mutiny. He touched his hat to the boys, and said:

"A fine morning, gents, for the time of year."

"Anybody can see that with half an eye," said Dick.

"Be you the new clerks at Golding Brothers, gents?"

"We are, and who are you?"

"I am a discharged soldier. All the young gents in the square know me. I'm in the corps of commissioners now, and attached to the square."

"Ah, I see," said Dick; "sort of old military dog, to fetch and carry."

"I don't know about being a dog," said the old man, with an offended air.

"What do you call yourself then?"

"The young gents have given me the nickname of the Bold Warrior, sir. That's what they all call me."

"You've seen some service."

"I have so, sir. My real name's Jaggs. I was a sergeant in the —th foot when I lost my wing."

"You could spin a few yarns I should think?" remarked Messiter.

"Yarns, sir! lor' bless you, I'm full of them."

"You look it."

"Full to burstin'. But I've seen as strange rigs in the city as ever I did soldiering abroad."

"Tell us a story," said Dick.

"You ain't got time to have it now, sir, 'cos Mr. Steadyman, he'll be here directly, the clock strikes ten, and he's the soul of business."

"Is he?"

"There ain't a more punctual man in the square, bar myself, and I'm always here at nine," said the Bold Warrior.

"You've got an easy time of it, though."

"Have I? You wouldn't say so if you knew all."

"Why not?"

"I'm everlastingly on my legs, and never know what it is to sit down. There's always somebody wants me to go somewhere."

"Nothing like being active," said Dick.

"Ah!" said the Bold Warrior. "You should hear my story about the Black Prince of Delhi."

"I'm agreeable," said Dick.

"I suppose you gents will have your dinner at the 'Devastation'?"

"Where's that?"

"Down Great St. Helen's, in St. Mary Axe. It's a fine place, the 'Devastation.'"

"Is it a tavern?"

"Sort of pub, where they does dinners, sir; and, oh, my! ain't there a screamer of a barmaid there."

The Bold Warrior winked his eye wickedly, and actually did a sort of subdued war dance on the stones of Counting-house Square.

"What's her name?"

"She calls herself Miss Agnesa de Vere, though I have heard that she was christened Sally Fleakins," said the Bold Warrior.

"We will dine there to-day, and see how we like it, Jaggs," said Dick.

"Right, sir. I'll meet you there, and if you like to pay for a bit of grub for me, we can go up stairs afterwards, blow our bacca, and have this 'ere hadventure."

"The Black Prince of Delhi."

"Yes, sir."

"That's a bargain; only don't do it every day, Jaggs."

"What, sir?"

"Why, cadging on to me for grub. Give some one else a turn sometimes."

"That's just what I was a-doing on, sir. You're a new hand, and I spotted you directly," said the Bold Warrior.

Dick was bound to admire his candor, if he disliked his principle.

At this moment Mr. Steadyman came up, and shook hands with the boys.

"Glad to see you, Lightheart and Messiter," said the head clerk.

"Same to you, sir," said Dick.

"I hope you will always be as punctual," said the head clerk, with a dry smile.

"Business first, sir, and pleasure afterwards is to be my motto," said Dick.

"Come inside then, and I will set you to work."

Entering the office, they found they were the first, as none of the other clerks had yet arrived.

"Ah," said the Bold Warrior, with a shake of the head, "they say new brooms sweep clean, but I'll lay wager they don't come up to time like this after a bit."

He smiled grimly, and favored his gray head with another sagacious shake.

"Howsomdever," he went on, "I do love a mug, and I think all recruits are mugs, though those two last ones look more learned than the usual run of new clerks."

Mr. Steadyman adjusted his spectacles, and conducting the new boys to their room, said:

"Take your seats."

Messiter climbed up on his stool, but Dick tumbled off his and fell on the other side.

"Jolly awkward, these stools, sir," he observed.

"Oh! dear no, capital things; lazy people can't go to sleep on them," answered Mr. Steadyman.

"It's like getting on the back of an elephant. Shall I tell you, sir, how I got on the back of an elephant in East Central Africa?"

"Another time, thank you."

"It's all very well when you're on, but"—

"Not now, Lightheart. Don't talk in business."

"All right, sir, but I should like to tell you about the elephant in East Central"—

"Be quiet, please," interrupted Mr. Steadyman; "you really must not talk in business. Here is the arrival book, I shall write your names first."

"What for, sir?" asked Dick.

"Mr. John Golding gives a prize at the end of every six months for punctuality. Try to obtain it."

"Is it worth having?" asked Dick.

"It is not the value of the thing so much as the honor of getting a prize," said Mr. Steadyman.

"Perhaps it's a silver toothpick, or a China orange," hazarded Dick.

"Oh! no. Last year it was a handsome copy of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"Who's he, sir?"

"Why, you know, it was Bunyan who wrote

the progress of Christian, who was a pilgrim. But don't ask so many questions."

"No, sir; only do tell me, is it nice to be a pilgrim?"

"There are no pilgrims now, boy," replied the chief clerk.

"How's that, sir?"

"Pray don't bother me. I will go and get you some work."

Mr. Steadyman retired into his private room, and returned with a bundle of papers.

"We are the consignees, Lighthead, of 200 hogsheads of sugar, ex 'Sarah Anne,' from Jamaica," he said.

"Very happy to hear it, sir," tried Dick.

"Don't interrupt me, please."

"No, sir."

"The sugar comes per ship from Kingstown and is invoiced at a sum you will find mentioned herein."

"Yes, sir."

"We sell the sugar to Baring, Gould & Co., at ten per cent. profit. You will consult the bill of lading, and make out the account."

"All right, sir; I'll see to Baring & Co.'s sugar," said Dick. "You've started me. Give Messiter a turn."

Mr. Steadyman turned his attention to Messiter, who soon had something to occupy his attention.

Presently Harry Wilding and Jerry Drake came in. They hung up their hats, and yawned as if they were not thoroughly awake yet.

"Hullo," said Dick, "don't catch all the flies."

"What's that to do with you?" replied Wilding.

"Nothing much."

"Shut up, then."

"I shan't if it doesn't suit me."

"We shall have a row, youngster," said Wilding, "if you cheek me. I'm head of this room, and look here!"

"Where?"

"At me."

"I don't like too," said Dick.

"Why not?"

"You look so jolly ugly when you're catching flies with your mouth wide open."

"When it's one o'clock I shall have to talk to you," said Wilding, curling his mustaches.

"Don't put it off, you make me anxious," replied Dick.

"You've got something to learn."

"Turn it up," said Dick, "and don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs."

"What do you mean, youngster?"

"I've forgotten more than you ever knew, and if you try to come the old soldier over me I shall have to prop you in the eye."

Mr. Henry Wilding put up his eye-glass and eyed Dick curiously.

"Here's the governor," said Jerry Darke.

The altercation ceased, and Mr. John Golding entered the room to state that Sunshine was not at all well and he had given him a holiday until the inquest and funeral were over.

Mr. Golding occupied a splendid house with large grounds at Highgate.

Little Sunshine, while under his protection would have the run of the garden and shrubberies. It was a pleasant change for him, if he could forget his grief at losing the man he had so long regarded as a father.

Mr. Wilding did not renew his attack upon Dick. Business had to be attended to, and the time to one o'clock passed quickly.

At one the clerks put down their pens, took up their hats, and prepared to go to those taverns which they patronized for dinner.

"Well, old son," said Dick to Wilding, "are you any better tempered?"

"Not with you," answered Wilding.

"Do the other thing then."

"I shall certainly please myself, and you will oblige me in future by addressing your conversation to somebody else."

"You dressed-up monkey," said Dick, "can you fight?"

"I do not lower myself by descending to

such blackguard ways," said Mr. Wilding, drawing himself up proudly.

"If you won't fight, the least you can do is to be civil."

"I warn you, Mr. Lighthead, that if you strike me I shall summon you for an assault at the Mansion House."

"Is that your game, you cur?"

"Don't call me names."

"Why not?"

"Because it's language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace."

"Is it?"

"Yes, and I can get a summons for that and have you bound over," said Wilding.

"You're a nice sort of a skunk," said Dick, contemptuously.

"Be careful."

"Get out of my sight," cried Dick; "if you say much more I'll wring your nose till your heart aches."

He made a threatening movement, and Wilding retired in a hurry to the door, and made his escape.

Messiter laughed heartily.

"What a beast he is," he remarked.

"Let him go. It isn't worth noticing," said Dick; "have you done your work?"

"Yes. Shall we show it to Mr. Steadyman?"

"I think we may as well. Mine's done," said Dick.

They took up their papers and went to Mr. Steadyman's room.

The outer office was empty, and it was the head clerk's custom to remain in his private room during the dinner hour, and munch a hard biscuit as he did not dine till he got home at seven.

Mr. Steadyman had composed himself in his chair for a nap. His eyes were closed, his head had fallen a little back, and he actually ventured to snore in the intervals of business.

On his table lay the morning paper.

"Gently," said Dick, holding up his hand to Messiter, and entering the room on tiptoe.

He took up the paper and quietly folded it into the shape of a cocked hat, and tearing some paper into strips, made a feather for its top. This he placed softly on the chief clerk's head, giving him a comical and somewhat martial appearance. A stick was in a corner of the room, and this he stood up on a chair and let it rest in the hollow of his arm, as if it was a gun.

Retreating carefully, he whispered to Messiter, "Won't he start when he sees himself in his hand-glass, or if one of the partners comes in?"

"Rather; my eye, won't there be a ch-yike!" said Messiter.

"We know nothing about it."

"Certainly not. We're going to the 'Devastation' to see the Bold Warrior."

"Come on then, let's make tracks," said Dick.

They had scarcely gained the middle of the outer office when a lady entered.

She was of the starched, uncertain-age order of maiden ladies. Her appearance denoted money, and she was in reality a wealthy client of Golding Brothers.

"Is anyone in?" she asked, rapping with her parasol handle on a desk.

"I think not, mum," said Dick.

"How's that?"

"All gone to dinner, mum."

"Never mind. Mr. Steadyman knows me well. Tell him that Miss Theodora Moggs wishes to see him."

"I—I—don't think he's in, miss," said Dick.

"Nonsense. He never goes out. How long have you been here?"

"This is our first day, miss."

"I thought so. What do a parcel of boys know? Stand on one side. I will go to the head clerk's room," said Miss Moggs.

"Oh! Theodora—I mean, that is, I don't think I'd go in, miss," stammered Dick, in some confusion.

Miss Moggs gave him a withering look. Striding across the office, she pushed open Mr.

Steadyman's door. The sight that met her gaze took her breath away. She held up her hands in amazement, and uttered a cry of surprise.

"God bless me!" she cried; "I never saw such a thing before."

Unfortunately for Mr. Steadyman there was a sample bottle of sherry and a glass on his table. This was a specimen of a consignment they had just received from Spain. It represented some very fine wine then lying in bond in the dock vaults.

"Wretched creature," cried Miss Moggs; "he has been drinking. Mr. Steadyman."

The chief clerk moved restlessly, as if he was troubled with a bad dream.

"Sir," she roared, "I call upon you to rise and explain this conduct, or I shall transfer my business to another firm?"

Mr. Steadyman awoke and rubbed his eyes. He saw Miss Moggs, he rose, and the stick fell to the ground with a bang. He bowed politely, and his appearance, as his head bowed up and down with the cocked hat was funny in the extreme.

"I crave your pardon, miss," he said, "but I fear I dozed off."

"Is this an intentional insult, sir?" she asked.

"What?"

"Take that ridiculous thing off your head, sir."

"Eh? off my head? Who says so? Why, what the?"

"Don't swear, sir," interrupted Miss Theodora Moggs, in her severest tone.

Mr. Steadyman had removed the obnoxious head-dress, and indulged in a good look at it.

"Well, I never," he said, "this is odd. Who could have ornamented me like this? I must inquire into the matter. Somebody has been playing me a trick, Miss Moggs."

"So it appears, unless"—

She hesitated, and pointed to the sherry.

"Ah, excuse me, will you try a glass? Very fine wine, I assure you," he said, misunderstanding her.

"No, sir. I never drink in the middle of the day," she said, sternly, "and it would be better for some other persons if they refrained also."

"My dear lady"—

"Sir, you shall hear from me by letter."

"Allow me to explain."

"No explanation is required. I wish you good-day, sir!" she exclaimed.

Putting up her parasol, she sailed from the room, thoroughly convinced that the head clerk was not sober.

He remained in a state of bewilderment, regarding the cocked hat with a puzzled air.

"Miss Moggs," he said at last, "come back, I beg; why, the old fool's gone! Dear me, how tiresome."

Dick and Messiter did not think it prudent to show themselves at such a moment.

They accordingly followed Miss Moggs, and saw her pop into a confectioner's shop in Bishopgate Street. Here she drank two glasses of sherry, and ordered real turtle soup, with punch to follow, in spite of her professed horror of drinking in the middle of the day.

Dick put his head in at the shop door.

"Oh, Theodora," he said, "won't you get jolly tight!"

Miss Moggs allowed the spoon to drop from her hand. The people in the shop looked and laughed at her, but Dick was gone long before she could so much as form a guess where the voice came from.

"Now for the 'Devastation' and the Bold Warrior," said Dick.

He and Messiter cut down Great St. Helen's, and soon came to the tavern where the fashionable barmaid held her court.

The boys were rather anxious to see Miss Agnes de Vere, whose real name Jaggs had stated to be Sally Fleakins.

CHAPTER VI.
AT THE "DEVASTATION."

THE "Devastation" was a handsome tavern, newly done up, where dinners were supplied from one to three.

Before and after those hours drinks of various kinds were served to admiring customers, who came to gaze at the incomparable Miss de Vere.

A not very young woman, with an immense chignon and an impudent expression which rather spoiled a pretty face, attracted Dick's attention as he entered.

There were three other barmaids, but this one was the chief. Those who were not acquaintances or favorites of hers had to wait a long time before she took any notice of them.

She was dressed in various colors of the rainbow, and if her attire was not in good taste it was at least showy and attractive.

Dick and Messiter took two vacant stools in front of the counter. The bill of fare was before them, and they looked at it.

"One o'clock," said Dick, "roast pork, veal and bacon, steak-and-kidney pie, boiled mutton and capers, roast calves' heart, fowl and ham. Plenty to choose from. What will you have, Harry?"

"Mutton for me," said Messiter, "and lots of turnips."

"I'll go in for the veal and bacon. Now, miss, please," said Dick.

Miss de Vere heard him distinctly, but passed by without so much as looking at him.

"Here, I say," cried Dick, "veal and bacon and mutton and turnips; look alive."

The barmaid took no more notice of the two friends than if they had been turnips. She stood at a corner, where a young man was leaning over the counter. This was Harry Wilding, one of her most devoted admirers and chief favorites.

"See what a pretty dahlia I have brought you for your hair," he said.

"Give it me," she said, with a toss of her head.

He took it from his buttonhole and she arranged it in her fluffy fair hair.

"How nice you look," he ejaculated.

"Do I?" she asked, carelessly.

"Lovely. I never saw you so charming."

"Nonsense. You don't mean that?"

"I do, indeed. Upon this heart I swear," he answered, laying his hand on his waistcoat, with a laugh.

Miss Agnesa de Vere smiled.

The two clerks were hungry, and grew angry into the bargain.

"Look how she's spooning that fellow, Wilding," remarked Messiter.

"Yes. It's a little too strong," replied Dick.

There was no other barmaid at that end of the counter, and consequently no one to attend upon them, unless it was Miss de Vere.

"Now then, Sally, wake up," cried Dick.

With a startled air, Miss de Vere turned sharply round.

"Here, I say," continued Dick, "veal and bacon, boiled mutton and turnips."

Miss de Vere bestowed a glance upon him which ought to have dried him up on the spot. But it didn't.

"This won't do, Sally," he went on; "time's valuable in the city."

She looked fiercely at him.

"Who are you calling Sally?" she asked.

"You, my dear."

"My name's not Sally; is it, Mr. Wilding?"

"Certainly not. You wouldn't own such a vulgar appellation," he said.

"Oh, wouldn't she? What do you say to Fleakins, eh, old son?"

Miss de Vere turned pale.

"Do you know those persons?" she asked, in a low voice, while her lips went white and trembled.

"Low cads," replied Wilding, putting up his eye-glass.

"Are they friends of yours?"

"No, not friends. Should be very sorry. Only in the same office, you know."

"Oh."

"Been abroad, I think. Sailor chaps, or something in rope and tar line."

"Ah, that accounts for it," said Miss de Vere, with a sigh of relief.

"Look here, Fleakins," continued Dick, "I know all your family. Old Fleakins got twelve months for whacking the old woman, and so the kids had to work. You've got a brother a shoeblack, and a sister in the watercress line, and the old girl keeps an apple-stall down Clerkenwell-green; and"—

"Oh, did you ever?" said Miss de Vere. "Do stop the young beast."

"Harry Wilding turned to Dick, and said in a severe tone:

"You're no gentleman, sir."

"I shouldn't think you were a judge of gentlemen," said Dick.

"Why not?"

"Because you never met one till you saw me."

"Ha, ha," laughed Wilding; "I flatter myself, sir, I know a gentleman when I see one."

"Don't look in the glass, or you'll be disappointed."

"Sir," said Mr. Wilding, sharply, "the man who insults a lady is—ahem—I don't want to use strong language."

"Don't mind me," said Dick, blandly.

"Well, sir, I will say it; he's a blackguard."

"Where's the lady?" asked Dick, innocently.

"I allude to Miss de Vere."

"Who's she?"

"The lady behind the bar."

"I should call her a barmaid, and I'm perfectly willing to treat her with proper respect, if she will attend to her duty," said Dick.

"She does do so."

"Eh; paid to attend to her master's business, isn't she?"

"I suppose so."

"Why don't she do it then? My friend and I want something to eat. We've only got an hour to spare for dinner, and she won't take the slightest notice of us."

"She treats you with the scorn you deserve," said Wilding.

An elderly man made his appearance at the bar at this juncture.

"Are you the proprietor of this house?" asked Dick.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Well, I wish you to speak to this young woman. I ordered dinner ten minutes ago, and she will not condescend to answer me."

"How is this, miss?" inquired the landlord.

"I've been very busy and had no time," she said.

"It's not true," said Dick; "if I can't get served here I shall go somewhere else. Keep the woman for ornament if you like, only you might as well inform the public and your customers generally."

"Take this gentleman's order at once," said the landlord, angrily, "and don't let this happen again, or you'll get your ticket."

Almost crying with rage, Miss de Vere came up to Dick and said:

"What did you order, sir?"

"Oh, you know well enough. I shan't waste my breath in telling you again," he answered.

She went to the pipe and gave the order, and in less than a minute the boys had their dinners.

"How's the mutton?" asked Dick.

"First rate."

"So is the veal," replied Dick, with his mouth full.

"I say," said Messiter.

"What?"

"Weren't you a little too hard on the girl?"

"Not a bit. It will teach her a lesson. I wouldn't have done it if she hadn't been spooning that fellow Wilding."

"She'll have her knife into us."

"What's the odds. Hallo! here's the Bold Warrior. Come, old bayonets, what's your tap?"

"Half a go of gin cold, sir," replied Jaggs, who made his entrance at this moment. "I'm rather late, I've been up to Threadneedle Street with a note and waited for an answer."

"Now then, Fleakins, gin cold, look alive," said Dick.

The gin was on the counter in a moment.

"Don't call me that horrid name," said the barmaid.

"Be a good girl and I won't."

"I'll try," she answered.

"That's right. Give the Bold Warrior some grub, stir your stumps, and do your spooning afterwards."

Miss Agnesa de Vere was more active than the oldest frequenter of the "Devastation" had ever known her to be before.

"I've licked her," said Dick to Messiter.

But he forgot that he had made an enemy of the girl, and that her enmity might some day work him an injury.

A woman never forgives a slight.

Dick had humbled her, and it was more than she could ever forget.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLACK PRINCE OF DELHI.

WHILE the clerks were finishing their dinners, the commissionaire, who was eating some savory-looking and smelling pie, prepared for action.

"I was going to tell you this story," he exclaimed.

"Peg away," replied Dick.

"I mean to, sir, because I hold that you've given me a dinner on the price of the tale."

"Right."

"Well, sir. It was in the year of the mutiny, when I was with Wilson before Delhi, the Sepoys were in possession of the city, and the general, they said, wanted some one to get inside, and find out the strength of the enemy."

"And of course you volunteered?"

"I did, sir, and disguised myself as a nigger-trader, sort of merchant who sits in the bazaar, and I got into the city."

"How did you work it?" asked Messiter.

"Well, sir, we won't go into that, because I don't want to make the story too long. It's a fact that I got in."

"Hope you liked it," said Dick.

"Well, I didn't, sir, for when I was inside, I remembered I couldn't speak a word of the black beggars' language."

"That was awkward."

"It was so, sir. Here was I, a supposed native, and couldn't speak a word of Hindustanee, Bengali, or any other dialect."

"What did you do?"

"I'll tell you what I did, sir," said the Bold Warrior; "I pretended to be dumb."

"That was a dodge."

"I call it a rattling good swindle," said Messiter.

"It answered my purpose, sir," said Jaggs; "for when they came and jabbered, I made signs and got on all right; but I've finished my pie, sir, and I think we'd better go up stairs, and I can blow my baccy and talk too."

"You luxurious old beast," said Dick.

"But if you've any objection, sir"—

"Not I, we'll smoke a cigarette apiece to keep you company."

They called Miss de Vere, who was, as usual, surrounded by admirers who looked daggers at Dick and Messiter. Evidently Mr. Harry Wilding had been giving them an exaggerated account of Dick's behavior to the popular idol.

"What's to pay?" asked Dick.

"Roast veal, greens and potatoes, half of bitter, and bread. One and three, sir," said Miss de Vere.

"That's a topping price for a crib like this," said Dick.

"Our usual charge, sir."

"I suppose they stick on something for looking at you, my dear. Here's the coin."

Now then, Harry, I'll toss you who squares up for the Warrior."

When the payment was settled they rose from their stools, which were eagerly seized by other customers of the "Devastation."

One new-comer arrested Dick's attention. He shook hands with Miss de Vere and also with Harry Wilding. It was the man who had annoyed Floss Silk in the street running out of Cheapside. This fellow Dick thought he recognized as the one who had robbed the murdered man in Counting-house Square.

The accomplice of the ruffian who had killed George Barclay, the traveler for Golding Brothers, and the supposed father of Little Sunshine.

Touching the commissionaire on the arm, Dick said:

"Do you know that cove?"

"Which one?" said Jaggs.

"The one with the flashy-looking clothes and Champagne Charley hat?"

"Oh! yes."

"Who is he?"

"A rank bad 'un, sir."

"Isn't his name Bob Smash?"

"I believe it is," answered the Bold Warrior; "but we call him in the city, 'the Caution.'"

"Why?" asked Dick.

"Because he is a caution and no mistake. He has ruined more young men in the city than I could count on my fingers."

"How?"

"How?" repeated Jaggs; "why, easy enough. He gets young men to bet and play at billiards and takes them about to music halls and theaters."

"Well, what then?"

"What then?" repeated the Bold Warrior, in a sarcastic tone. "Don't you know what it ends in?"

"No."

"I'll tell you."

"What?"

The Bold Warrior lowered his tone and said impressively:

"Fraud, forgery, embezzlement, the police court, the goal. That's what the Caution's friendship ends in, and I'm sorry to see Mr. Wilding so thick with him."

"I shan't cry, for one, if he does come to a bad end," said Dick.

"Don't you like him, sir?"

"No."

"He's altered from what he used to be. There was a time when he took an interest in hearing the stories of the Black Prince of Delhi."

"Did he?"

"Ah, many a time he's stood me a bit of grub for telling him of it, but he's changed now, what with the Caution and Miss de Vere, there."

"It's time we got on with the Black Prince, or we shall have to put it off till to-morrow," said Dick.

The Bold Warrior took the hint, and led the way up stairs, but to reach the smoking-room, they had to pass Bob Smash and Harry Wilding.

Dick favored him with a searching glance and a sort of irritating half-sneer.

"Look here, youngster," said the Caution, "I've got a tip to give you."

"Better keep it," said Dick.

"You keep your swivel eye off me," cried Bob Smash, "or it won't be good for your health."

"You're not so good-looking that it's any treat."

"Never mind that; don't you do it."

"I've got an object in looking at you, old pal," said Dick.

"What's that?"

"I want to make up my mind."

"To what?"

"Whether I can swear to you," answered Dick.

Bob Smash went a dirty white, and his impudent manner vanished.

"You let me alone and I'll let you," he said.

"I'm glad I've knocked some of the bounce

out of you," answered Dick; "but I don't know that I shan't put the bobbies on to you for that job in Counting-house Square."

The Caution's eyes flashed fire.

But he choked back his rage, and said in a forced tone of good humor—

"Run along. You'll do. You like a bit of chaff, I can see."

Dick gave him a knowing look, and followed the Bold Warrior and Messiter upstairs.

Jaggs filled his pipe, ordered what he called a glass of refreshments, and prepared to tell his tale.

"You see, sir," he said, "there's a lot to be related before we come to the Black Prince. I've got as far as where I was in Delhi, a dumb merchant, with nothing to sell, though I got over that by making signs that the English had robbed me."

"That was good," remarked Dick.

"A subscription was made for me, and I soon did a good business in the bazaar, but I kept my eyes open and spied about."

"You had an easy time of it."

"I had for a while, but at last I got into trouble, for a woman thickly veiled beckoned me to follow her."

"If you were after the woman, I don't wonder you came to grief," said Dick, with a shake of the head.

"The woman led me to a gate of the palace," continued Jaggs; "I passed in, and after traversing a long corridor, and descending a flight of steps, she vanished, there was the turning of a key in the door, and I was alone."

"Where?"

"Ah, you will never guess, sir. Nor could I at the time; though afterwards I found out I was entrapped in the palace of the Black Prince of Delhi; I was, and no mistake."

"By Jove!" said Dick, with a low whistle.

"The sight I then saw, sir, made my blood run cold, my flesh creep, and my hair stand on end like a besom. It was an awful sight, and never during a long and eventful life will that fearful spectacle be absent from my gaze."

"What did you see?" asked Messiter.

The Bold Warrior passed his hand over his brow as if to shut out some dreadful reminiscence.

"Well, I don't mind if I do, sir," he answered, in an abstracted manner.

Looking up, he beckoned the waiter, pointed to his glass, and intimated that the young gentleman would pay.

The clock struck two.

"Time's up, sir," he said.

"So it is. We must cut," said Dick.

"But about the Black Prince?" said Messiter.

"It'll keep till to-morrow, sir."

"What was the sight?"

"Ah, it was an awful sight, and no mistake. Well, good-bye, gents, and thank you for me," said Jaggs.

Seeing that no more could be got out of the Bold Warrior at that sitting, and that they would be late at the office, they hurried away to regain their desks before Mr. Steadyman could make a bad mark after their names.

"If the B. W. goes on at this rate," remarked Messiter, as they ran along, "he'll take a week telling the Black Prince of Delhi."

"A month, you mean," replied Dick.

They both laughed.

"It's a thundering crammer his getting into Delhi at all, I think," said Messiter.

"I wonder what the awful sight is; he led up to it well, and knows where to break off," said Dick.

They reached the office in time, and were pleased to find that Mr. Steadyman did not suspect them to be the authors of the practical joke which had made him look so supremely ridiculous in the eyes of Miss Theodora Moggs.

At six o'clock work was over, and they hurried to the bank to find a "bus to take them home to tea."

On reaching No. 1 Selina Villas, they pushed open the garden gate, and walked up the weed-covered path to the house.

Tom Cooper's voice was heard shouting down the kitchen staircase.

"I tell you, Caxey," he said, "that I want some hot water. It's no good your hiding down there like an old toad in a well, and pretending you're out. If I have to come down, I'll galvanize you the first time I catch you asleep."

"And if you do, Mr. Cooper, I'll have the law of you," replied the landlady's voice.

"Hold hard," said Dick to Messiter, "here's a row on; let's listen."

They hung back behind a tangled mass of lilac and jessamine, where they were secure from observation.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NIGHT'S AMUSEMENT.

"Ha, ha," laughed Mr. Tom Cooper, mockingly, "I knew I should draw the badger."

"Who are you calling badgers?" shouted Mrs. Caxey fiercely.

"Don't get riled, Caxey; keep your wool down."

"It's a crying shame that a respectable lone widow woman should be insulted in her own house like this."

"Don't you do the injured innocent, Caxey," replied Mr. Cooper, "or I'll come down and vaccinate you."

"Oh, the horrid wretch!"

"Bring up some hot water, quick. Sharp's the word."

"I haven't got any fire."

"Yes, you have, Caxey. I saw the smoke coming out of the kitchen chimney. Don't tell fibbers. It's a bad habit, and if I come down I'll set the chimney on fire, and you'll have to pay for the parish engine."

"Oh, the varmint. Was there ever such a limb, such a brimstone limb in this mortal world?" groaned Mrs. Caxey.

The clerks now entered, and Tom Cooper seeing them, said:

"How are you, my noble sportsmen? Come into my humble diggings. How are you, my noble swells?"

"Jolly, thanks. How's yourself," replied Dick.

"Among the middlings. I've been engaged in cutting up all the day, and it don't make a fellow over bobbish."

They took seats in the medical student's apartments, and looked around them. It was in a state of the utmost confusion. Pipes and tobacco-pouches were mingled with bones and books, while surgical instruments were strewn about in all directions.

"Would you like to see my anatomical museum?" asked Cooper.

"Yes, I should," replied Dick.

"Wait till old Caxey comes in. It always gives her a turn. See this knob in the carpet?"

"Yes."

"It's a spring."

"What for?"

"I've fitted up the four cupboards you see in each corner with an apparatus, and when I touch the knob, the doors fly open and the grinning ones come out."

"Here's Mrs. Caxey," said Dick.

"Look out."

As the landlady appeared in the doorway Tom Cooper pressed the spring, and in an instant the cupboard doors flew open, and a ghastly skeleton advanced from each.

The effect was weird and startling.

Mrs. Caxey uttered a shrill scream, and nearly dropped the tray which she carried in her hand.

"Oh, drat the ugly things!" she exclaimed "I wish you'd keep 'em quiet, Mr. Cooper."

"That's what you'll come to, Caxey, when you're made worm's-meat of," said Cooper.

"You nasty creature."

"Ain't I awfully nasty?" he asked.

"You're worse than that."

"Say 'Good-night' to them," said Cooper.

"What! talk to the dead? Not I!"

He touched another spring and each skeleton extended its right arm threateningly.

"Speak to them, or else I'll set them on to you."

"I shan't, it ain't right."

Again a spring was touched, and the horrid things began to nod their heads in a warning manner.

"Oh, do keep 'em quiet," said Mrs. Caxey. "Dear heart alive, I wish I'd never let to a medical student."

"It's too late to wish now, except to wish them good-night."

"Good-night, gentlemen, I hope your souls are at peace," said Mrs. Caxey, who would have done anything to get rid of the sight.

"If you hadn't spoken they'd have each come up and had a kiss, Caxey," said Tom Cooper.

Mrs. Caxey waited till he touched the knob again, and the skeletons slowly retired to the cupboards, the doors of which closed of their own accord.

Then she put down the tray and laid the tea-things.

"Two more cups. These gentlemen will have tea with me to-night," said Cooper; "and Caxey"—

"Yes, sir."

"Get a couple of soldiers, regular bloaters, you know. Cut them up the middle and bring them up sharp."

Mrs. Caxey cooked two red herrings, brought up the bread and butter, and left the gentlemen to have their tea.

"It took me some time to rig up those skeletons," remarked Mr. Cooper; "but I'm fond of mechanism; and it was a lark the first time I set the grinning ones on to old Caxey."

"Would they come out and kiss anybody?" asked Messiter.

"No; they can't go any further, but she believes I can do anything with them. She hates me, and yet all the time she's afraid of me."

"I should have been startled if you hadn't told me what you were going to do," said Dick.

"As it was, I felt funky," observed Messiter.

"It's nothing, when you're used to it," answered Tom.

When tea was finished he looked at his watch.

"What do you say to an evening's amusement?" he asked.

"What sort?"

"Oh, a night at the Barn."

"Where's that?"

"Not far from here. It's a music hall. Used to be a place for the people of Merrie Islington to go and sit in the fields. Now they've built all round it, and it's a sing-song. Only a bob."

"I'm on," replied Dick.

"We shall meet a lot of fellows I know. I belong to a club called the Rumpumpar Boys. Most of the members are students, and they mostly go to the Barn in the evening."

"That will be jolly," said Dick.

"I'll make a Rumpumpar Boy of you if you like," said Tom.

"Thank you. Nothing like seeing life."

"When you're young's the time. As soon as I've passed I shall marry and settle down in the country, at a place where my gov.'s going to buy me a practice, and I shall be bolted up."

"No Barn—no Rumpumpar Boys then," said Dick with a smile.

"You're right. It will all be altered."

"I suppose you do as you like at the Barn."

"Very nearly. We always get up a jolly row if we are interfered with, and medical students ain't at all particular," replied Tom Cooper.

"What goes on at the Barn?" asked Messiter, to whom a music hall was something new.

"Oh, we get around old Tosh, the chairman, and there's singing and tumbling. You'll hear the great Lebanon and Lily Lyle."

"Come on, then," said Dick. "Let's have as much as we can for our money."

"How are you off for tin?" asked Tom.

"We're flush," replied Dick.

"That's right. You'll have to stand Sam for me, as I'm short; and I'll do the same for you when my coin comes up next week."

It was a peculiarity of Mr. Cooper's that he was always "short."

"You may as well lend me a couter," he added, "and then we'll know where we are, and start fair."

Dick gave him a sovereign, which he slipped into his waistcoat pocket.

"Shall we do to go as we are?" inquired Messiter.

"Yes, you're up to Dick, and look like coin no end. Tosh will see drinks when you come in, and work you for fizz, but take my tip, and give him gin hot; it's good enough for Tosh."

"What does he want champagne for?"

"Because he gets half-a-crown on every bottle that's brought to his table."

"Oh, I see," answered Dick.

"A leary old card is Tosh," said Tom, with a wink.

He led the way to the door, where Mrs. Caxey had posted herself.

"You're never going to take those two young innocent lambs out, Mr. Cooper," she said.

"They are taking me, Caxey," answered Cooper.

"Well, all I can say is, it's a downright cruel shame to introduce them to the dissipations of music halls and such like."

"You go to your virtuous flea bag, Caxey, and dream that you've got one of the grinning ones alongside of you," answered Tom.

Dick and Messiter were already half-way down the garden, and Tom soon joined them.

"By your left!—march!" he cried, putting himself between them.

The hearts of the young clerks beat rather more quickly than usual, for they were about to witness a new phase of life in London under the able directions of Mr. Tom Cooper.

A walk brought the three friends to the music hall which Mr. Tom Cooper had called the "Barn."

It was well filled as they entered, after paying three shillings at the money-taker's box.

But there was room for them at the table where Mr. Tosh presided. Tom led the way to this point, nodding familiarly to the waiters, bowing to some ladies in the stalls, and shaking hands with several men of his own age as he went along. He was evidently well known.

Dick and Messiter followed him until they reached the table in front of the manager.

Mr. Tosh was surrounded by about a dozen young men of fast appearance. A troupe of acrobats were amusing the audience with their varied tricks. These were the Bounding Brothers of Ispahan, and the Terrific Twisters of Turkestan.

The B. B.'s were mounting on the shoulders of the T.T.'s as the boys entered. Not much applause greeted their awful feats. The young gentlemen did not seem to care about that sort of performance.

Mr. Tosh nodded to Tom Cooper, who held out his hand, saying:

"How do, Tom?"

"Nicely, thank you. How's yourself?" said Cooper.

He asked some men to move a little, and make room for himself and friends. This was done. Dick and Messiter were seated, and Tom Cooper placed himself by their side.

"Friends of yours?" inquired Tosh.

"Yes."

"Glad to see you, gentlemen," said Tosh, stroking his mustache, and looking vacantly at his empty glass.

"Thank you," said Dick; "I hope it will not be our last meeting."

"Same here, sir."

There was another look at the empty glass, and Dick, taking the hint, said:

"What will you have to drink?"

"Well, sir, it's customary for new members to pay their footing, and I think that as this is the first time I've had the honor of seeing you, a little fizz will"—

"Stash that," interrupted Cooper. "They're my friends, Tosh, and it won't run to fizz."

Mr. Tosh smiled blandly.

"Anything the gentlemen like will do for me, Mr. Cooper," he said; "but I thought you liked the thing done properly."

"You old vampire."

"Ha, ha," laughed Tosh. "You like your joke, Mr. Cooper. Come, come. I see it is to be champagne after all. John!"

A waiter stopped in his walk past.

"Two bottles of champagne for these gentlemen. As they are strangers here, let it be O. K."

"Right, sir," said the waiter.

Tom Cooper looked fixedly at Mr. Tosh for a moment, and then burst into a loud laugh.

"Tosh," he said.

"Sir to you," was the reply.

"You're an old fox; hang me if you aren't."

"If I can score over you, Mr. Cooper, I must really lay claim to some cleverness."

"It's a chalk to you this time."

"Of course it is. If a man brings babies to a show, he must either pay for them himself, or let them pay," said Tosh, in a half-voice.

"You're no kid," said Cooper, with a wink.

The acrobats finished their performance, and the chairman, rapping on the table with a hammer, called attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "the Great Lebanon will appear next."

At this announcement there was a great cheering and stamping of feet, with occasional rapping of knuckles and glasses on the tables.

The Great Lebanon was a popular favorite. Cocking his hat on one side, and displaying his handkerchief, he sang a song expressive of his delight at being a swell, and his approbation of Pall Mall as a promenade. When the chorus came, Tosh brought his hammer down with a bang. All the young gentlemen and the audience generally declared that they were swells, in various keys, and said that they, too, would like to walk along Pall Mall.

This being satisfactorily accomplished, the Great Lebanon went on to the end of his song. Then he sang another, and apologized for not being able to oblige the company with another, as he was due at another music hall some miles off in half-an-hour, and had to go.

A serio-comic followed him, and about this time the champagne made its appearance.

Dick paid for it. Tosh and his friends drank it.

The next favorite was a lady in a very short skirt and a low dress. She danced in a very clever manner, to the rapturous delight of the male portion of the audience.

"Isn't this jolly?" said Tom Cooper.

"Awfully," replied Dick.

As he spoke he saw two men with a gayly-dressed lady enter the stalls.

They took seats just behind them.

Cooper followed his gaze, and seeing it rest upon the lady's face, said, "Fine gal that; know her?"

"Rather," answered Dick.

"Who is she?"

"A little bit I know down the city way," said Dick, knowingly.

"Oh!" said Tom, with a subdued whistle, "I didn't think it was in you, young man."

"What's that?" inquired Messiter.

"Your friend," answered Cooper, "is talking mysteriously of interesting females."

"What's a female?" asked Messiter, innocently.

"Thing in petticoats."

"Oh! I see. Where is the thing in question?"

"Close by, to the left," replied Cooper.

Messiter looked in the direction indicated.

"Why, that's the barmaid of the 'Devastation,'" he exclaimed.

"Is that all?" said Tom Cooper; "I thought Lightheart was far gone in love with some shop girl who made him buy gloves she didn't want."

"No," answered Messiter; "we dine at the 'Devastation, and have seen her there.'"

"If that is the extent of his wickedness I'll forgive him."

"You needn't have rounded on a pal, Harry," said Dick, with an injured look.

"After the way you chaffed her the other day, I didn't think you'd mind."

"Not I. Shall I chaff her again?"

"I wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Look at the two fellows she's got with her."

"One's Bob Smash," said Dick; "but I don't know the other."

"I do," put in Tom Cooper. "It has been my misfortune to meet the Caution, and I know his friend."

"Who is he?"

"Joe Swindles, a low betting man, who'd rob a church, and shear a sheep in the depth of winter, to say nothing of having a poor medical student for the last five bob, if he's got half a chance."

"They are a nice pair, then," remarked Dick.

"I should say they just were."

"It's lucky we know their characters," said Messiter, "because now we are not likely to have anything to do with them."

"I've heard lots of talk about Joe Swindles and the Caution," remarked Cooper.

"Nothing good of them, I'll bet," said Dick.

"No. They wouldn't stick at murder."

Tom Cooper had his hat on. The men with Miss de Vere noticed this, and did not like it. Neither did the barmaid herself.

"Tell that man to take his hat off, will you?" she said to Bob Smash.

"If he don't, my dear, I'll make him," replied the Caution, clenching his fists fiercely. Raising his voice, the Caution cried:

"Hi! you, sir. Off with that goss of yours."

"Did you speak to me?" asked Tom Cooper, quietly.

"Yes, I did."

"What did you do me the honor to observe?"

"Take your confounded tile off."

"Why?"

"The lady can't see," replied the Caution.

"That's not true. My hat is in nobody's way, and if you want it off, you'd better come and take it."

"It wouldn't be difficult," said Bob Smash, angrily.

Dick and Messiter had overheard this conversation during the progress of a comic song, and they thought the prospects of a row with the Caution infinitely more entertaining than the funny verse which came from the stage.

"Cold! isn't it?" said Dick, loudly. He put on his hat with an insolent look at Bob Smash.

"Very," answered Messiter, imitating his example.

The Caution and Joe Swindles looked blankly at one another. They were openly defied.

"Well, I'm blowed," said the Caution.

"Are you going to stand this?" said Joe.

"It's those two cheeky young fellows who were so rude to me at the D.," remarked Miss de Vere.

"So it is," answered the Caution, adding, "I say, Joe."

"What?"

"That youngster' is dangerous. He seems to twig our little game, and he has accused me of—— Here he lowered his voice. The remainder of his communication became inaudible.

"By gosh!" cried Joe Swindles, coloring up, "we shall have to settle him."

"I mean having those hats off," said the Caution, who had been drinking, and was in the humor for a disturbance.

"Perhaps you'd best not rile him up, old pal," remonstrated Joe.

"I tell you I ain't going to be cheeked by no counter-jumping coves," replied the Caution.

"Bob's quite right, Joe. Let him alone," said Miss de Vere.

The Caution rose from his seat, and walking across the space which separated the stalls from the chairman's table, stood in front of Dick.

"Take off yer 'at," he said, in an excited voice.

"Pick up your h's," continued Dick, with a sneer.

"You won't doff the tile, eh?"

"No."

"Do you know what I shall do?"

Again Dick replied in the negative.

"I shall clout it off," said Bob.

"Try it on, old son," said Dick, calmly.

Mr. Tosh observed this disturbance, and saw that mischief was brewing.

"Now, gentlemen, now," he exclaimed, "don't be foolish."

"Who's foolish?" asked the Caution, fiercely.

"Sit down, I beg of you, sir. Miss Lily Lyle is about to appear. Pray be seated, sir."

"I shan't unless he takes his 'at off," replied the Caution.

He folded his arms, and looked defiantly at Dick, who returned his gaze with interest.

CHAPTER IX.

A ROW AT THE BARN.

A SIGN from Tosh brought up the head waiter, who touched Bob Smash on the arm.

"This won't do, sir," he said. "Must sit down. Take your seat, please."

"That's right, waiter," said Dick. "Take the low cad away."

"I'll give you low cad," cried the Caution, forgetting prudence and everything else in his passion. "I'll low cad you, my boy."

He dealt a couple of open-handed blows at Dick.

The first knocked his hat off, and the second caught him a stinger on the ear.

Dick's monkey was up in an instant, and springing to his feet, he prepared to let the Caution have it.

In vain Tosh begged for silence.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "this will not do. Miss Lily Lyle is about to oblige. Gentlemen, do you hear me? Miss Lyle will appear next."

No attention was paid him. Dick and Bob Smash were at it ding dong, and one seemed as good as the other. Tom Cooper and Messiter were soon upon their feet. Joe Swindles thought from this threatening attitude that they meant to fall upon his companion. He rose also.

Miss de Vere pulled him by the sleeve.

"Sit down, Joe," she cried.

"I can't. They're going to muzzle Bob."

"Not they; he can take his own part."

"I tell you I ain't going to see a pal muzzled, and I shall slog in."

Throwing off Miss de Vere's grasp rather rudely, he stepped forward.

"You're one of them, I think," he said, addressing Tom Cooper.

"You mean you are, so mind your eye if you come too near me," answered Cooper.

Joe Swindle's reply was a straight-out blow from the shoulder. Tom dodged it and landed in return one on the nose.

"One for his conk," he cried. "Come on, my lads. Smite them hip and thigh."

The chairman and the waiters now tried to interfere between the combatants. But the blood of all was up, and no compromise would be listened to. Suddenly Tom Cooper fell back and said to Messiter:

"Tackle this cove for a minute for me, will you; I want to give my cry."

"Right you are," answered Messiter, who rushed in at Joe Swindles.

"Aha," said Joe, with a sort of Irish burr; "sneaking off, are you?"

Tom put his hands to his mouth and shouted:

"Rumpumpar Boys to the rescue!"

Instantly a dozen or more men sprang up from different parts of the hall.

They descended from galleries and climbed over partitions, all making their way to the scene of action.

Again Tom's voice was loud and clear.

"Rumpumpar Boys to the rescue!"

Tosh and the head waiter looked blankly at one another.

"Where's the governor?" asked Tosh.

"Emptied the boxes at the door and gone home," was the reply.

"Oh, Lord!" said Tosh, "we're in for it. If the Rumpumpar Boys mean business, it's all up the Baltic with us."

"Shall I bring in the police?" asked the head waiter.

"Yes. Let them turn these fellows out; don't charge anyone, though."

"No, sir."

"Mind there's no charge. We can't afford to have anyone run in, or we shall lose our license."

"We must keep order, you know, John, but we can't afford police cases," said Tosh.

He was in an agony of apprehension.

"And John," he cried.

"Yes, sir."

"Lower the gas, and tell the music to stop."

"Right, Mr. Tosh."

The waiter, who was an old hand and a clever man into the bargain, hurried away to carry out these orders.

Several people in the hall took the part of Bob Smash and Joe Swindles.

When they saw the medical students rushing from all parts of the hall to the attack, they came up also. A free fight ensued. Meanwhile, Dick was getting rather the worst of it with the Caution. He was a stronger and bigger man. In close contests weight will tell, and Dick was borne forcibly to the ground.

At that moment the gas was lowered, and Bob Smash got hold of Dick's throat, which he pressed in a dangerous manner.

"Hi! help!" gasped Dick.

Messiter, who was engaged in painting the eyes of a couple of young grocers' assistants who thought they ought to be in the row, heard the cry.

In a moment he threw himself on the Caution and dragged him off Dick by the back of his neck.

Hitting him under the ear, he said:

"Down you go, my dear fellow; hope you like it."

The Caution staggered and saw stars.

"Back out," he cried.

Joe Swindles was already edging towards the door.

The two ruffians joined one another, and fighting back to back, managed to make their escape.

Outside the hall they were joined by Miss de Vere.

She was in state of great agitation.

"Are either of you hurt?" she asked.

"Banged about a bit, that's all," said Joe.

"I've got a mouse under the eye," exclaimed Bob Smash; "cuss that youngster; how he did fight!"

"We must settle his hash," replied Joe.

"I think so too, he knows too much."

"Suppose we shut him up in the old house in——"

He was interrupted by Miss de Vere.

"Are you out of your mind, Joe?" she said.

"What's up?" he asked.

"You don't know who may be listening. Don't be a fool, but call a cab."

"A Hansom?"

"Yes. I can ride bodkin, and we shall get home sooner," she said.

They hailed a cab, and getting in, were driven off, Miss de Vere sitting between the two men, partly on their knees and partly on the seat.

By dint of coaxing and pushing, the waiters had separated the combatants. The Rumpumpar Boys meant mischief. But Tom Cooper being appealed to by Tosh, gave them the signal to be quiet. Consequently they sat down again, and the gas being turned up again, the performance went on. Few of the audience remained, however, for the respectable portion had gone away at the first intimation of the riot.

Dick was not much hurt, though he and Messiter were bruised considerably. Taking their seat at the table again, they wiped their

faces. Tom Cooper looked paternally at them.

"You're a couple of nice fellows to take out," he said. "Look at the cloud of anguish on friend Tosh's face."

"It wasn't my fault altogether," said Dick; "I think the row began in your direction."

"There's ingratitude for you. Did you hear that, Tosh?"

"Mr. Cooper," said the chairman, "if you come here for that sort of game often," you'll ruin the hall."

"What's the odds? the hall doesn't keep me," said Cooper.

"Silence, gentlemen, if you please; the original Cream of Tartar will appear in his highly characteristic Cossack of the Don feat."

"Let's cut it," said Dick.

"I'm agreeable," said Messiter.

"Don't go yet," said Tom Cooper, "we shall have another lovely row on directly. I've only got one black eye at present."

"Do you want another?"

"Yes."

"I should have thought one was enough."

"Not a bit of it. If you get two, you can say you were thrown out of a cab or were in a railway accident."

"Oh."

"One black eye is awfully low, but if you have two everybody thinks it must have been an accident, and sympathizes with you accordingly."

"I'm afraid I'm in for one," said Dick, with a half smile, "and it won't look well in business."

"We must buy a raw steak here before we go," answered Tom Cooper.

"What for?"

"To tie over your eye. It will take all the inflammation down, and if the blackness won't go, I'll paint your eye for you to-morrow."

"Will you, indeed?"

"Certainly. Don't fluster your milk; I'll turn you out as bright as a new pin."

Dick thanked him for his kindness, and when the song was over they went away.

It was past twelve when they got home, and entered Mr. Cooper's hospitable apartment.

"Well, I'm jiggered," said that gentleman; "I've been and gone and done it."

"What?" asked Dick.

"Left the key in my cupboard."

"And why shouldn't you?"

"Because it is a hundred to one that old Caxey has purloined my whisky."

He went to the cupboard and made an examination.

"Oh, my prophetic soul," he said, "it's all gone. Caxey must be as tight as a fly. Shall I have her up!"

"It's too late," said Dick.

"Well, perhaps it is; but if I don't get up sides with her for this, my name isn't ancient Thomas," exclaimed Tom Cooper, with a subdued howl.

"Never mind," said Dick. "I for one don't want anything."

"We will triumph, dear boy," said Tom, smiling blandly.

"How? the pubs are all closed."

"And your bottle's empty. So we're licked," replied Dick.

"That's as clear as two and two make four," put in Messiter.

"Simple children," answered Tom. "I never allow anyone to score over me. Did the idea of a cellar never strike you?"

"Have you one?"

"I have, and Caxey knoweth it not. There is a triumph of inventive genius for you. Remove the table."

Dick pushed the table on one side.

"Look out," exclaimed Tom.

He went to the wall, and touching a spring, similar in construction to that which moved the skeletons, a trap-door flew up.

The carpet had been carefully cut to fit it, and nailed on, and being under the table it passed unnoticed.

The door disclosed a cavity, in which were sundry bottles.

"What will you have?" inquired Tom.

The boys asked for a little claret, which was soon produced and poured out.

"This is what vexes the soul of our Caxey," remarked Tom. "She guesses I've got a cellar somewhere, but, bless her artful old heart, she can't tell where."

Dick laughed, and with a yawn expressed a wish to go to bed.

"Tired is he? Does he want to go to bye-bye?" said Tom. "So he shall, but first of all here's the steak."

"The what?"

"Raw beef for the blackened peeper. I got it at the Barn. Take it up with you. Try a bit, Messiter, you're painted as well as Lighthouse."

"So are you," observed Dick.

"Oh! that's nothing, I'm used to it. My friends would think there was something wrong if I didn't put one of my eyes in mourning at least once a month," said Tom.

Dick wished him good-night, and followed by Messiter, retired to his bed-room.

In the morning the bruises had assumed a milder aspect, and the boys put in an appearance as usual at Counting-house Square without exciting any remark.

CHAPTER X.

MR. GOLDING, JUNIOR, SPEAKS TO DICK.

JOHN GOLDING, of the firm of Golding Brothers, was laid up with an attack of his old enemy, the gout.

In his absence his brother, William Golding, managed the business.

To Dick's surprise Mr. William sent for him soon after his arrival at the office.

Mr. William was a quiet, good-tempered man. Very much liked by all the clerks. He had an impediment in his speech. This caused him to stutter dreadfully.

The effect of his stuttering was to make the listener laugh at first, but he got very angry when laughed at, and the clerks got used to his peculiarity after being with him a short time.

"Good-morning, tut-tut-tum Lighthouse," he said, as Dick entered his room.

"Same to you, sir," replied Dick.

"Take a tut-tut-tay chair."

"Thank you, sir."

"I have sent for you to tut-tut-tum talk about the tut-tut-tan murder."

"The murder of Barclay, your traveler, sir? Oh! that ought to be inquired into, for I am almost certain I could put the police on the two parties who did it."

"Yes, that is my tut-tut-tum brother's opinion, as well as my own," answered Mr. Golding.

"You see, sir, I could not swear to the two men, but I could point them out to the police, and they might find some of the stolen money about them, or something," said Dick.

"Do you know where to tut-tut-tay find these tut-tut-tum rascals?" inquired Mr. Golding.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, "at a tut-tut-tum public."

For the moment he had forgotten himself. He was much amused at Mr. Golding's peculiarity, and had been imitating him to himself. In an instant he saw his mistake.

Mr. William Golding, of the firm of Golding Brothers, fixed his clear eye reprovingly upon him.

"Tut-tut-tay Lighthouse," he said, severely, "do you know that you have dared to tut-tut-tum mock me?"

"I beg pardon, sir," said Dick, in a contrite voice.

"Never make tut-tut-tum fun of a fellow creature's tut-tut-tum afflictions, tut-tut-tum Lighthouse."

"No, sir. Look it over this time, sir; I'm very sorry."

Dick bit his lips when not speaking, to prevent bursting with laughter.

"I shall have a fit, I know I shall, if he goes on like this; I'm ready to burst as it is," he muttered.

"Well, I pardon you," said the junior part-

ner, "but don't let it tut-tut-tum happen any tut-tut-tum more."

Dick was glad to get off so well.

"Shall I point out the men I suspect, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Golding, "you will have an extra tut-tut-tum hour at dinner time for that tut-tut-tum purpose."

"May Messiter come with me, sir?"

"What tut-tut-tum good can he do?"

"We always hunt in couples, sir."

"You are old friends, I believe, and I shall not put any tut-tut-tum obstacle in the way of your taking tut-tut-tum Messiter."

"Very good, sir."

"You think you can identify the two men you saw in the tut-tut-tum square on the dreadful tut-tut-tum night when poor tut-tut-tum Barclay met his tut-tut-tum death?"

"I fancy so, sir," replied Dick.

"At one o'clock the tut-tut-tum commissioner Jaggs will be here."

"What for, sir?"

"To take you to the detective who has charge of the tut-tut-tum case, and if you can serve the ends of tut-tut-tum justice, you will be doing a good tut-tut-tum deed."

"When will Little Sunshine come back, sir?"

"He is here to-day; I drove him from my tut-tut-tum brother's."

"Is he better, sir?"

"Oh! yes. He seems resigned to his tut-tut-tay lot," replied Mr. William.

"I believe, sir, that there is a brilliant future in store for young Barclay, or Little Sunshine, as they call him."

"Possibly, though I cannot make out tut-tut-tay much from what that poor tut-tut-tum fellow Barclay said when tut-tut-tay dying."

"He'll be a lord some day, sir; you see if he isn't," said Dick, enthusiastically.

"I hope he may," said Mr. William.

"It will all come right in time, sir; take my word for it," said Dick.

"We will pray that it tut-tut-tay may," said Mr. William Golding. "Run away now, and get on with your tut-tut-tum work."

Dick went back to his room, where he found Little Sunshine at work.

Jerry Darke and Wilding were talking to him, and Dick was pleased to see that the boy looked nearly himself again. Wilding was more civil to Dick than he had been before.

Looking up, he said, "Have you seen the tut-tut-tum governor?"

"Yes, I tut-tut-tay have," said Dick, laughing.

"Wasn't it a tut-tut-tum treat?"

"I should think it was; I got into his way of talking, and tut-tut-tummed him to his face without meaning it."

"Did you, by Jove!" said Wilding; "I suppose he wigged you for it."

"Not much, Mr. William isn't a bad sort. How are you, little man?"

"Quite well now, thank you," said Little Sunshine.

"How do you like your new quarters?"

"They are all very kind to me at the big house."

"That's right. You must come and have tea with us on Saturday. Messiter and I want to talk to you," said Dick.

"Thank you, Lighthouse, I shall be very glad," said Little Sunshine.

He was dressed in deep mourning, which the care of Mr. Golding, Senior, had provided him with.

Dick worked away until one, and when the clock struck, he threw down his pen.

"It's tut-tut-tum time," he said, "for our tut-tut-tay dinner. Hurrah!"

"Come on, Dick," said Messiter.

"Are you going to the D.?" asked Wilding.

"Most likely," answered Dick.

"Don't chaff that girl any more, will you?"

"Why not?"

"Well, I'm rather spoons on her, and I should take it as a favor if you wouldn't."

"All right. If she's civil and obliging I'll let her down easy."

"Besides" —
 "What?" asked Dick, as Wilding hesitated.
 "There are two friends of hers who have sworn to smash you up if you cheek her again."
 "I know who you mean."
 "Do you?"
 "Rather."
 "Who?"
 "You mean the Caution and Joe Swindles. We gave them a ram-dam-jam hiding last night at the Barn," said Dick.
 "Did you though?"
 "Ask Messiter if we didn't."
 "Was Agnes—I mean Miss de Vere—at the Barn?" asked Wilding, looking amazed.
 "Yes."
 "With those two chaps?"
 "Bob Smash and Joe Swindles were with her; and the Kumpumpar Boys let them have it, I can tell you."
 "By Jove!" said Wilding, "what a set-out it must have been."
 "I say, Wilding," said Dick.
 "What?"
 "You tell your friends, the Caution and Joe, that they're wanted."
 "By whom?"
 "They'll twig; say I told you so, and that the detectives are after them for that job in the square. They'll dry up after that," replied Dick, shaking his head significantly.
 "I'll tell them what you say, but if there's a row, don't blame me," replied Wilding.
 "Not I," said Dick, carelessly.
 The clerks put on their hats and went out to dinner.
 At the door they met the Bold Warrior.
 "Good-day, gents," he said. "Has Mr. Golding, Junior, spoken to you, Mr. Lighthouse?"
 "He has a tut-tut-tum talked to me," said Dick.
 "That's right, sir."
 "Where's the detective?"
 "He will join us at the 'Devastation,' sir."
 "Come on, then. We'll have the finish of the Black Prince of Delhi."
 The Bold Warrior smiled as if he had his own opinion upon that matter.
 They walked together to the "Devastation" tavern, and arrived, when business was at its height.
 Miss de Vere saw them come in.
 She hastened to them.
 "What would you like, gentlemen?" she asked, politely.
 "Give us the bill of fare. That's your sort. Calves' head and bacon will do for me, my dear. Give your order, Harvey, and you too, Jaggs. I suppose I'm in for your grub again."
 "Thank you kindly, sir," rejoined the Bold Warrior. "I'll have roast beef, marrow, and taters."
 "Same here," said Messiter.
 The dinner was served without delay.
 Dick remarked that the Caution and Joe Swindles were, as usual, hanging over the bar. It was all the better for his purpose.
 When dinner was over, Jaggs said:
 "The detective will join us up stairs, and if so be as you would like me to go on with my story."
 "Of course," said Dick.
 "Very well. Enough said, sir. Lead the way," answered the Bold Warrior.
 They sought the smoking-room, where Jaggs filled his pipe, ordered a hot whisky, sipped his grog, and prepared for business.
 "Where did I leave off, sir?" he asked.
 "You'd just got into the palace, and you saw an awful sight."
 "Right. It was a large and lofty hall. Straight in front of me were ninety-nine human corpses, all stained with gore, and lying in a heap on the bloody floor."
 "Ninety-nine?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Why don't you say a hundred at once?"
 The Bold Warrior put on an offended air.
 "Do you think I'd tell a lie about a human corpse? No, sir, not me," he replied.
 "Well, cut on," said Dick.

"These corpses, sir, were those of British soldiers, who had been caught in an ambush, and they were fearfully mutilated."
 "What were they brought there for?"
 "In order that the bloodthirsty tyrant might gloat over the feast of gore."
 "What tyrant?"
 The Black Prince of Delhi, sir," replied the Bold Warrior.
 "He must have been a nice old cup of tea," remarked Messiter.
 "While I was counting the corpses, sir," continued Jaggs, "I saw many a pale and haggard face that I knew."
 "Oh, you did count them?"
 "Certainly, I did, or how should I have known there were ninety-nine?" said the wily old soldier.
 "I forgot that. Go on."
 "Presently, sir, a dozen or more niggers came into the hall, and seizing me, dragged me along until we came to a flight of steps, which we descended."
 "Where to?"
 "The hall of justice. On a throne sat the Black Prince of Delhi, surrounded by his minister's of state. The throne was of gold, but what struck a chill to my heart was the sight of so many instruments of torture, such as whips, racks, thumb-screws, and all sorts."
 "Pleasant," said Dick.
 "The two executioners stood by, and one savagely stirred up a fire in a stove, in which branding irons were being made red hot."
 "Were those for you?" inquired Messiter.
 "You'll see presently, sir."
 "All right."
 "In a voice of thunder the Black Prince ordered me to be questioned."
 "A minister of state who spoke English approached and inquired if I was not an Englishman."
 "You made signs that you were dumb, I suppose," said Dick.
 "I did, sir, but it was no good. The Black Prince ordered me to be put to the torture. Six powerful men seized me. I was borne to the ground, the garments torn from my back, and with a grim smile the executioners approached me with a red-hot iron in each hand. I was tempted to cry out. Fortunately I resisted the impulse; already I fancied the iron's were upon me, and that my flesh was hissing under their pressure, when just at that moment —"
 The Bold Warrior broke off abruptly.
 Looking up, he held out his hand, with a smile. "Good-day, sir," he said; "this is Mr. Squirm, the detective, sir; Mr. Lighthouse, Mr. Squirm. Mr. Squirm, Mr. Messiter; take a seat, sir."
 "Well," said Dick, burning with impatience, "what happened to you when they'd got the red-hot irons?"
 "We must leave that till next time, sir. Mr. Squirm is here on business," replied Jaggs.
 "Yes," said Squirm, "I am here on business, but don't let any one overhear us. There are always bad characters about, and we policemen, sir, carry our lives in our hands."
 Dick took a look at the new-comer, who was not at all like what he fancied a detective was. Mr. Squirm was a little, insignificant man, with a timid and deferential air, very humble in his manner, and always running himself down, and talking of the perils of his profession.
 Nevertheless, he was considered remarkably clever.
 In the force he was called the Ferret.
 He had brought more criminals to justice than any other man.
 Though so apparently distrustful of his own powers, and meek in his manner, he was as sharp as a needle, and never missed anything.
 In fact, many people believed that his submissive, humble manner was assumed for his own purposes.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE TRACK.

MR. SQUIRM refused an offer of refreshment from Dick, and expressed a wish to hear anything he might have to say.
 Dick informed him of his suspicions, and declared that there was a likeness between the Caution and one of the men who murdered Barclay, the traveler.
 Squirm laughed in a restless and subdued manner.
 "It's not much to go upon," he said, "though, of course, you may know better than me, who am only a poor member of the police force."
 "That's like Squirm, he's always running himself down," remarked Jaggs.
 "I can't boast of the education of city gentlemen," said Squirm. "I was neglected in my youth, but I hope I do my best for one in my position."
 "Mr. Golding thinks you clever, or he would not employ you," said Dick.
 "Painstaking is the word, sir; and if I do get the reward —"
 "Is a reward offered?"
 "One hundred pounds will be given by Golding Brothers for information leading to a conviction for the murder of George Barclay."
 "Come, that's handsome," said Dick.
 "It's a large sum for a poor man like me," said Squirm.
 "I hope you'll get it."
 "If I was only clever, sir, I might have a chance, but I'll do my best. Let me see. Bob Smash, *alias* the Caution, five-and-thirty years of age, tall, fair, whiskers, mustache, flashily dressed, has scar over left eyebrow, was convicted of embezzlement in '59, and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, was indicted under the name of Johnson in '63 for conspiracy to defraud, and acquitted."
 Dick gave a long, low whistle, and turned a significant look on Messiter.
 Squirm talked slowly, without raising his eyes from the table.
 He played carelessly with the stem of a pipe, as if addressing himself rather than his listeners.
 "You seem to know the man," said Dick, in surprise.
 "It's my duty, sir, to be acquainted with bad characters in the city," said Squirm, modestly.
 "Do you know his companion?"
 "Joe Swindles—tall, dark, about forty years of age, whiskers and beard shaved, slight mustache, notorious burglar; originally a city clerk, but got seven years' penal servitude in '55 for burglary; has since had various short terms for pocket-picking and assaults."
 "A nice pair," said Dick.
 "They are down stairs in the bar now, unless they saw me come in and have stepped it."
 "Do you think it likely they are the murderers?" inquired Dick.
 "I do, sir."
 "What shall you do—take them in charge?" asked Messiter.
 "We don't do things that way in the city," said Squirm, with a half-chuckle.
 "How then?"
 "We can't go upon suspicion. We must have proof."
 "And you will get it," said Dick, confidently.
 "Now you've put me on the track, I shan't sleep over it. I know in what direction to hunt now, and it's no use turning a dog up when the scent won't lie."
 "Very true."
 "I think I see my way," continued Squirm, warming up wonderfully under the influence of the information he had received.
 "Do you? That's jolly."
 "We'll have them, Mr. Lighthouse. If we don't, I'll use bank notes for shaving papers." Mr. Squirm positively rubbed his hands with delight.
 Dick looked at his watch and saw that it was time to go.

"We must hasten back to the office," he said, "or there'll be a row and we shall be in it. Have you done with me, Squirm?"

"Yes, sir. I suppose I can always find you at the office if I want you?"

"Always."

Leaving the detective and the Bold Warrior together, the clerks returned to the office.

They saw Mr. Golding, Junior, as they entered.

"Well," he cried, "have you seen the tut-tut-tat detective?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick.

"And does he think he can make anything of your tat-tat-tum description?"

"I thought he seemed rather hopeful, though he's a dry sort of fellow, sir, and doesn't talk much."

"Ah," said Mr. William, "I think we have set the tat-tat-tum ball rolling, and shall catch the tat-tat-tum villains after all."

He waved his hand by way of dismissal, and the boys entered their room.

They were getting into their work, and being naturally quick and intelligent, they gave every satisfaction to Mr. Steadyman, who personally superintended their work.

It was a lovely evening when they quitted the office and started for the walk home.

The air was bright and crisp, and the setting sun tipped the roofs of chambers, warehouses, and offices with golden splendor.

They had nearly reached home and were in a small street in the neighborhood of Haverstock Hill when they heard a woman's voice.

It was raised in a slight tone of anger.

"This is unmanly, sir," she said.

"My dear child, listen to reason," answered a man, in a gentlemanly tone of voice.

"I wish to have nothing to do with you, sir. You have employed a man to watch me to my lodgings, and you come here to annoy me."

"Don't say that."

"It is true."

"Nothing is further from my thought, sweet girl."

"I must beg that you will never speak to me again. If I had a father or a brother, you would not dare to do it," said the girl.

Dick touched Messiter's arm.

"That's Floss Silk's voice."

"Whose?"

"The girl we met in the street running out of Cheapside, when the Caution was after her."

"Is it?"

"I'm certain of it," answered Dick; "you know I never forget a voice or a face."

"What's up?"

"Don't you see?"

"No," replied Messiter.

"This cove is some swell who is sweet on Floss Silk, and he's got the Caution to watch her home."

"I see."

"Having found out her address he comes here to annoy her, as she says."

"Let's pitch into him," exclaimed Messiter.

"Like steam. Who's afraid?" answered Dick.

The young clerks advanced to the spot from whence the voices proceeded.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK MEETS FLOSS SILK AGAIN.

FLOSS SILK, looking very pretty and engaging as usual, was standing in front of a tall, gentlemanly man.

A brougham was not far off.

From the expression of the girl's face it was clear that the attentions of the gentleman were distasteful.

Dick's face flushed angrily.

He advanced and politely lifted his hat to Floss Silk.

"We have had the pleasure of meeting before," he exclaimed.

Floss Silk's pale face lighted up with a glow of delight.

"Oh! yes," she answered.

"You remember our last meeting in the city?"

"Perfectly. You were good enough to do me a service. Will you add to the debt of gratitude I already owe you?"

"Will I not?" replied Dick, readily.

"This gentleman will not let me go home," said Floss Silk.

"Sir," said Dick, sternly, "you hear what this young lady says?"

The stranger regarded him haughtily.

"By what right do you take her part?" he inquired.

"By that right which every man has to protect a woman from insult."

"Leave me alone, young man, or it will be the worse for you. This young lady is going with me in my brougham," was the answer.

"Net this journey," said Dick.

"Ha! Do you defy me?"

"Be off, or else I shall have to slip into you. Look alive."

The gentleman glanced angrily at Dick.

"Stand on one side, Harry, and look to the girl," said Dick.

He squared up to the stranger, and without further parley, stood up on his toes, and hit him in the face.

Staggering backwards, he fell upon the muddy pavement, calling loudly for help.

Taking hold of Floss Silk's arm, Dick drew her away.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"Close by," she answered.

"Come along, then. I have settled the swell for a time, though he is too big for me to fight, and I don't want a thrashing if I can help it."

With Messiter on one side of her and Dick on the other, she holding on to both their arms, Floss Silk tripped quickly along.

They turned down a side street, and stopped before a small, neat-looking house.

"Here is my place," she said. "Will you come in and see my friend Jenny Cotton, who will thank you for what you have done?"

"With pleasure," answered Dick.

The little milliner opened the door with a key, and ushered them into a prettily but poorly furnished parlor.

Nothing was seen or heard of the strange gentleman who Dick had so unceremoniously tumbled into the mud.

Relieved from her fright, Floss told them how the gentleman had said he was a lord and very rich.

He had declared he loved her, and wanted her to go away in his brougham to be married.

"We shall have to move our lodgings, I fear," she added. "But wait here, please, and I will go and call Jenny, who must be up stairs."

The boys were left alone.

Looking round, they saw a couple of sewing-machines, more useful things than pianos for girls.

Several dresses and skirts were lying about, some finished, and others incomplete.

While a forest of cottons and pieces lay about in admirable confusion.

"Odd we should come across her again like this," said Dick.

"Just in the nick of time, too," replied Messiter.

"I'm glad of it, though. We shall all be friends now."

"Isn't she a pretty little thing?"

"She's a darling."

"So I think," said Messiter.

"Mind you don't fall in love with the pretty milliner, Harry," said Dick, warningly.

"Don't be a fool. She might come in and hear you," said Messiter, in a tone of vexation.

"How red you are."

"It's just like you to say such stupid things," cried Messiter; "I never saw such an ass as you are."

Dick laughed loudly.

"Jaw away," he said.

"I won't go out with you any more if I'm to

be chaffed like this, because I happen to say a girl is!"

"Hush," cried Dick. "Here they are."

Footsteps were heard in the passage.

The next moment the door opened, and little Floss Silk introduced her friend, Miss Jenny Cotton.

The boys rose and expressed their delight at making her acquaintance.

Jenny Cotton was tall and thin, her features were regular, and her face good-looking. In person she presented a contrast to little Floss Silk, who was short and plump.

Directly she spoke, Dick saw that she was a sensible, good-natured girl, well fitted to be the friend and companion of Floss, who was some years younger.

"We must introduce ourselves," said Dick. "My name is Richard Lightheart, my friend's, Harry Messiter, and all we can say is we are very glad to have been of service to Miss Floss Silk."

"We are pleased to make your acquaintance," said Jenny. "Are you in the city?"

"Clerks in Golding Brothers, general merchants, Counting-house Square," replied Dick.

"Poor Floss is dreadfully persecuted by some gentleman."

"I don't call him a gentleman, Jenny," said Floss.

"Well, no, dear, he isn't. No true gentleman would annoy a girl against her will."

"If he does it again and I am by, I'll get up a row and have him mobbed," said Dick.

"Will you stay to tea?" asked Jenny.

"No, thanks, not to-day. May we come again?" inquired Dick.

"Certainly, whenever you like. Our house is very humble, but"—

"Say nothing about that," interrupted Dick.

"You are sure of a welcome."

"Thank you. I suppose you little milliners are very jolly."

"We haven't much time; we have to work so hard, but we make the best of things."

"I see you have sewing-machines."

"Yes, we couldn't get on without in these days, when work is paid so little for. Ah me! if ladies only knew how many hours were spent over their dresses," said Jenny Cotton, with a sigh.

Dick quite agreed with Jenny that ladies ought to be ashamed of themselves to buy cheap things.

He gave her his address, and asked her to send to him if Floss Silk was annoyed again by the strange gentleman.

Then he took his leave with Messiter.

"Nice girls," said Messiter, as they got out.

"Very. Jenny is pretty," said Dick.

"I like Floss best. Jenny is all legs and wings," said Messiter.

"She is thin and weedy, but if she did not work so hard she would look better."

They returned to their lodgings, and Dick felt pleased that he had found out where Floss Silk was living.

Some day he might be able to do her a real service.

But until he could put some proof before her that she was the daughter of a lord and the sister of Little Sunshine, he did not care to unsettle her mind by saying anything about it.

The next day he went into the city as usual.

Dick remarked that Harry Wilding looked very anxious, and could not fix his attention on his work.

He kept on looking at his watch, and this was more especially remarkable after dinner.

Mr. Steadyman came into the room and looked round.

"Lightheart," he said.

"Sir."

"I want you to run down to the Commercial Docks."

"Yes, sir."

"You will verify these warrants and come back as soon as possible."

Mr. Steadyman handed him some warrants for various goods, and he went away.

"Do me a favor, Lightheart?" inquired Wilding.

"Certainly."

"See what has won the Leger, will you?"

It was the second week in September, and the Great Northern race was fixed for that day. Dick did not know this, and he took little or no interest in racing.

"Got any money on?" he asked.

"More than I can afford to lose," exclaimed Wilding.

He looked at him with a scared, anxious expression.

As Dick left the counting-house he could not help feeling sorry for his fellow-clerk.

Evidently he had been betting heavily.

"Poor beggar," he said to himself, "he's miserable enough. Perhaps he'll be worse when he hears the name of the winning horse. I always thought betting was a bad game."

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY WILDING WANTS A FRIEND.

DICK was rather surprised at Harry Wilding's civility to him.

He had regarded him more as an enemy than a friend.

After doing his work at the docks he saw a man selling papers near the Mansion House.

Think of Wilding's request, he beckoned the man.

"Here y'ar, sir. Great St. Leger, sir. Result of the race. St. Leger, sir. Winner of the"—

"Hold your row, and give me a paper," said Dick, interrupting the bawling of the man.

Unfolding one from a quire, he handed it to Dick, when some one touched him with an umbrella on the shoulder.

He turned round.

It was Mr. William Golding.

"Hope you don't tut-tut-tay bet, Lightheart," said the junior partner.

"No, sir."

"Why, then, did you buy the tut-tut-tum paper?"

"Not for myself, sir."

"Who then?"

Dick hesitated.

He did not know whether he ought to mention Wilding's name, and thinking it might do harm, he determined not to do so.

Dick was never a sneak.

If he could not do a friend or acquaintance a good turn, he would not do him a bad one.

"I thought I should like to have a look at the paper, sir," he said.

"What for? Do the tut-tut-tum politics of the tut-tut-tum day interest you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Want to be member for the tut-tut-tum city some of these tut-tut-tum days, eh?"

"I may come to that, sir, under your able guidance."

"Good lad, good lad," said Mr. William Golding, "glad you don't tut-tut-tum bet."

Dick hurried back to the office, looking furtively at the paper as he went.

He saw that a horse called Satanella had won the Great St. Leger stakes.

When he entered the room, after speaking to Mr. Steadyman and telling him what he had done at the docks, he stopped at Wilding's desk.

Wilding looked up eagerly.

"Well?" he said.

"Satanella's won," said Dick.

The pen fell from Wilding's hand, and he became as white as a sheet.

"And I backed Sensation," he muttered.

"Cheer up, old man," said Dick, pitying him, "it will be all the same a hundred years hence."

"She told me to do it," cried Wilding.

"Who?"

"Agnes."

"Miss de Vere?" asked Dick.

"Yes. She said she had the tip from Bob Smash and Joe Swindles, who knew the stable, and I gave them the money to put on."

"If they were in it, of course you were bound to lose," said Dick.

He went to his own desk to finish his work, and Wilding said nothing more.

Scarcely a word was spoken until six o'clock came.

Jerry Darke, who did not like Wilding, nudged Messiter about half-past five.

"I say," he said.

"What?" asked Messiter.

"Ain't he down in his luck?" said Jerry Darke, pointing with his pen to Wilding, and speaking in a low voice.

"He's not altogether up to Dick," said Messiter.

"Ain't I glad, just."

"Are you?"

"Yes; he's been betting, and he's lost. He's always bullying me, but I knew my time would come."

"Is he in much?" asked Messiter.

"That I can't say. Hope he is—that's all."

"Don't you like him?"

"Not I! who does? When he's up, he's too cocky for any one to like."

"He's down now, by the look of him," said Messiter.

"Yes, he's been hit hard. I hope he'll have to go."

"Why?"

"I shall be head of this room then."

"Will you?"

"Yes. It goes by seniority, and my screw will be raised. Oh, ain't I glad that Wilding's got put in the hole over this race."

Jerry Darke grinned and rubbed his hands, as if he had studied glorying over other people's misfortunes in the light of one of the fine arts.

"Don't be an unfeeling beast," remarked Messiter.

"I ain't unfeeling," said Jerry; "you don't know the troubles I've had."

"I've seen a few."

"Would you put up with them, and not feel a spite?" asked Jerry, biting the end of his pen.

"No. I should have a row out and have done with it. That's the difference between you and me," said Messiter.

"That's not my style. I can't fight, and I'm not so flash as he is."

"Do you think he'll have to go?"

"He looks as I never saw him look before," said Jerry Darke.

"Well, don't bother me about your spites," said Messiter; "I want to get my work done."

As the clerks were preparing to leave at six o'clock, Mr. Steadyman entered their room.

"I shall want one of you to stay this evening as late as ten o'clock," he said.

"Please, sir," answered Wilding, "I've got a bad headache. Can't one of the juniors stay?"

"Suppose we say Lightheart," observed Mr. Steadyman.

Dick made a face.

"You're in for it," whispered Messiter.

"Worse luck," said Dick.

"Yes, Lightheart will stay. Go now and have your tea, be back in half-an-hour. Come to my room, and I will give you your instructions," said the chief clerk.

There was no help for it, and Dick prepared to go to his tea.

"You can go home, Harry," he said to Messiter.

"When shall you be back?"

"About eleven. I shall take the underground to Gower Street, and get a 'bus at the bottom of Hampstead Road."

"If you like I'll stay with you."

"Thanks, old boy," said Dick, "I'd rather you would not. You are reading one of Dickens's books, and a quiet evening will be just the thing for you to enjoy it in."

"All right. I shan't turn in till you come back. Where shall you go for tea?"

"Oh, the 'Devastation' is as near as any place," exclaimed Dick.

They shook hands and separated, Dick going

through the gathering mist of the dull autumnal night to the tavern.

He ordered his tea, and sat down in a quiet corner, where he was free from observation.

To his surprise he presently saw the Caution enter, followed by Harry Wilding.

The latter looked very much upset and crestfallen, while Bob Smash was bullying and imperious.

"I tell you," said Caution, as they took their places before the bar, with their backs towards Dick, "that you've dropped a sight of coin over this Leger."

"I know it," cried Wilding, sadly.

"I've put it on for you, and I'm answerable, so you will have to hand over to me."

"I can't. I haven't got it."

"You must try,"

"What is the use of talking like that?" exclaimed Wilding in a petulant tone. "Here's all I can rake together."

"How much?"

"Ten pounds," replied Wilding.

The Caution laughed ironically.

"That's a lot of good, that is," he said; "never mind, hand it over."

The money was transferred from one pocket to the other.

"Now, how much more do you suppose I want?" the Caution asked.

"About a hundred, isn't it?"

"A hundred and fifty. You forget that 'place' bet I made for you."

"Curse the turf. I wish I'd been dead before ever I put my first shilling on a horse," cried Wilding.

"That's all very well. It's what you youngsters always say when you lose. But if you'd won, as you might if Sensation hadn't gone amiss, you'd have sung a different tune."

"The game's up now."

"No, the game isn't up. Can't you borrow the mopasses?"

"No."

"Won't your governor, or mother, or sisters part?"

"I've used them all up long ago," said Wilding, with another deep sigh.

"Can't you take a couple of hundred?" said Bob Smash.

"Where from?"

The Caution lowered his voice, but though he spoke softly, Dick caught the scoundrel's words.

"Why, from the safe in the office, or collect the coin on behalf of the firm."

Wilding started.

"That's robbery and embezzlement," he said, with a frightened look.

"What's the odds. Who's to find out?"

Wilding said nothing for a moment.

Then he cried in an excited voice:

"You know that new clerk, Lightheart?"

"I know the young whelp well enough," said the Caution savagely. "Him and me'll have to square accounts before long."

"Well, he's to remain last at the office to-night."

"Is he?"

"I heard the chief clerk tell him so, and I could get into the office, collar the bullion, and fix the blame on him."

"Stunning," said the Caution, with a smile of pleasure; "that's your graft, my lad."

"I think I can do it."

"You shall try, anyhow. Will Lightheart have to lock up?"

"Mr. Steadyman is sure to give him the keys and tell him to make all right, and I never knew the safe to be without a few hundreds in it, in notes and gold."

"Good again," said Bob Smash. "Let's get round into another pub, in case we're seen together. This 'ere crib is getting too well known, and I should cut it if it wasn't for Miss de Vere."

The lady in question was up-stairs having her tea.

"Drink up," said the Caution, pointing to some brandy he had ordered.

Wilding tossed the brandy down his throat, and quitted the tavern after his companion.

They had seen nothing of Dick Lighthouse, who kept the newspaper before his face, and shrank well back into the shadow.

"The villains," he muttered.

"Who are you a-callin' villins, sir, begging your pardon?" said a voice at his elbow.

Looking up, he saw the Bold Warrior.

"Oh, good-evening, Jaggs," he said.

"Same to you, sir, and I hope you are quite well, as it leaves me at present."

"I am glad you have come, Jaggs."

"Are you, sir? Why?"

"You may help me to stop a robbery."

"A what?" cried the Bold Warrior.

"A robbery, I tell you."

"Where? Not at your governor's?"

"Yes."

"Bless my heart and soul! A robbery at Golding Brothers! They'll rob the Bank of England next. Tell us all about it, sir."

"Sit down," said Dick.

"Stop till I give my order, sir."

The Bold Warrior provided himself with a glass of gin and cold water.

Then he took a seat by Dick's side, and prepared to listen attentively to his recital.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

"You know Mr. Wilding in our office?" began Dick.

"Yes, sir. He's a 'aughty sort of young gentleman, flash sort of clerk, togs himself up to the nines, and comes out on Sunday up to the knocker, and no mistake. Is rather sweet on Miss de Vere, here. Yes, sir, I know Mr. Wilding."

"There isn't much haughtiness about him now."

"Ah! I said pride would have a fall."

"He has been betting, Jaggs," said Dick.

"Has he now? That's what all the fast lot do. First it's billiards and pool, then music halls of a night, and after that bettin'."

Jaggs shook his head gravely.

"The Caution's got him under his thumb," answered Dick.

"He's in good hands, then," said Jaggs, with a grin.

Jaggs solemn and silent was comical to look upon.

But Jaggs with a grin was enough to make a cat laugh.

However, Dick was too full of serious thoughts, and Jaggs with a grin was lost upon him.

"He has employed Bob Smash to put money on a horse for him, his horse has lost, and Bob is dunning him for about two hundred pounds."

"Whew!" whistled the Bold Warrior.

"I was sitting here and heard their conversation just now without being seen; and how do you think that villain Smash has told him to get the tin?"

"Couldn't say, sir, not if I was to guess for a thousand years."

"Wilding is to rob the safe to-night, while I am in the office, as I have to stay late, and the blame's to be put on me."

Jaggs whistled again.

"The Caution knows that I suspect him of the murder of Barclay, and he's got to hate me in consequence."

"It's a pretty bit of villany, sir," answered the Bold Warrior; "and what do you propose to do?"

"I will get you to hide in the office, and be a witness for me, and to help me if you can," said Dick.

"I've got but one arm, sir, yet that shall do its little worst for you," replied Jaggs, boldly.

"Thank you."

"Why not tell Mr. Steadyman, sir?"

"For this reason. Wilding is being worked upon by a scoundrel, and I don't think he's had at heart."

"Bad enough to try and ruin you."

"I can forgive that, and if he expresses his

sorrow to-night when we catch him in the act, I may let him off, and give him another start."

"Which is very generous on your part, sir."

"I only do as I should like to be done by," replied Dick, whose thoughts went back several years.

He saw himself in the power of a villain.

He saw himself in his father's library with his hand on the notes.

Yes. He saw how beautiful is mercy, and he decided to give Wilding a chance.

"If I tell Mr. Steadyman," he said, "the fat will be in the fire at once, and it will be a case of police, and hauled off to the Mansion House direct."

"That's right enough, sir," said the Bold Warrior. "Ah, Mr. Lighthouse, it's easy to see your heart's in the right place."

"I don't like to be too hard on fellows, because I know I've got my faults, and if there was no such thing as forgiveness, where should I be?"

"Good again, sir. It's as good as a sermon, and quite as improv'in' to hear such sentiments."

"I don't want to preach. Now let's step it; time's up."

"Shall I come in with you?"

"No. Knock at the door at a half after seven, when I shall be alone."

"Right, sir," replied Jaggs.

Dick got up and paid his score, and buttoning up his great-coat, prepared to return to the office.

"You ain't got time to hear the final of the Black Prince, have you, sir?" said Jaggs, as if a sudden thought had struck him.

"As a matter of fact, I don't think I have," said Dick.

"I'll walk with you to the square, and just go on a bit."

"Very well."

He put himself by Dick's side, and then walked up Great St. Helen's.

"It was a fearful moment," he said, "and beads of perspiration trembled on my brow, while my limbs shook with the horrid agony of anticipation."

"I saw the red-hot irons drawn from the fire, and watched them with a strange species of fascination akin to that felt by the bird for the cruel serpent that is about to devour him."

"Never shall I forget that hour."

"My hair turned a shade grayer, and my nose acquired a redness, which, strange to say, it has never lost to this day."

"Suddenly the Black Prince of Delhi descended from his diamond throne."

"Speak, slave!" he said, in a voice of thunder. "Are you, or are you not Amgiad, the sorcerer of Rangoon?"

"Still I preserved a rigid silence."

"The Black Prince made a sign to the executioners, who approached me with the red-hot iron."

"Those were held so close to my breast and back that the slender covering I wore fizzed and hissed as it smouldered away."

"Speak, if you would save yourself from the torture," again said the Black Prince of Delhi.

"A sudden thought struck me."

"Your irons cannot hurt me, for I am the dread being you name."

"You are Amgiad, the Sorcerer of Rangoon?"

"I am he, and at a word from me this palace would fall in ruins over your head," was my reply.

"The Prince and his brother fell back appalled."

"At this critical juncture, a terrific crash was heard overhead."

"The roof fell in with an awful noise."

"Many were wounded, some killed."

"The Black Prince escaped, as did I, without injury, and I was carried away and placed in a dungeon when the confusion was over."

"They all thought the smash was my doing."

"But it wasn't."

"What was it, then?"

"A shell from the British guns. Our men had got the range, d'ye see?"

"Well, and what happened?"

"I remained an inmate of the dungeon for two days, and was better treated, and everyone fully believed I was the famous Amgiad, the Sorcerer of Rangoon," replied the Bold Warrior.

"What put that idea into their head?"

"I know no more than a baby, sir."

"Go on."

"What follows is too dreadful, but— Here we are at the office door, sir," said the Bold Warrior.

"To be continued in our next, eh, Jaggs," said Dick, with a laugh.

"Never fear, sir, I shan't forget. Half after seven you said, I think."

"That's it."

"Right, sir."

The Bold Warrior made a salute in military style, and wheeling round, went off.

Dick entered the office and found Mr. Steadyman waiting for him.

"Oh! here you are, Lighthouse," he said; "you must go through these books carefully, as a mistake has occurred in the account of Arles Dufour & Co., of Paris, with whom we have extensive dealings."

"A mistake, sir?"

"A cash error. They say we have overcharged them by about seventy pounds. See if that's so. Here are the books, the account, and their letters."

"Very well, sir."

"Good-night. I have left the key in the safe, where you must lock up the books. See that all is right before you go away."

"I'll see to it, sir, and will stick at it till I find out the error," answered Dick.

Mr. Steadyman shook him by the hand, and Dick was left alone to his work.

It was not an easy task.

Far from it.

But he went laboriously at it, and became quite absorbed in a sea of figures.

At half-past seven there was a knock at the door.

He opened it and admitted Jaggs.

The Bold Warrior put his finger on his lips and immediately dived under a table, where he was effectually hidden.

Scarcely had Dick returned to his stool, which was in the inner office, where he usually sat, than another knock was heard.

This time he admitted Wilding.

"Oh!" said he, "I'm awfully sorry to disturb you, Lighthouse, but I've left my pocket-book in my desk."

"Don't mention it," said Dick.

"I will go and get it. Don't mind me," said Wilding.

"All right."

Dick noticed that he was ghastly pale.

However, he pretended to be very much absorbed in business and returned to his desk, as if he had no suspicion.

Wilding opened his desk, found what he said he was in search of, and passed by Dick.

"I won't bother you to get up," he said.

"Thank you, I'm up to my eyes," said Dick; "jolly bore to have to stick here like this, but I have had to do it."

"I suppose so."

"Good-night."

"I wish you well through with it. I'll let myself out," replied Wilding.

He walked away, and Dick went on with his figures, turning over leaves and making notes, without looking up, as if Wilding's visit was the most natural and commonplace event in the world.

Five minutes elapsed.

Dick laid down his pen, and looked anxiously at the door.

"It's about time the Bold Warrior made some sign," he muttered.

Scarcely had half-a-dozen seconds elapsed than a voice was heard.

"Help, sir! I've got the thief. Help, help!" said Jaggs.

Dick rushed into the outer office.

He saw Jaggs suddenly thrown upon his back, he with one arm being no match for Wilding with two.

Then Wilding made a rush for the door, but Dick was after him.

"No, you don't, my hearty," he said.

He managed to reach the door first, and put his back against it.

"How dare you stop me, Lightheart?" asked Wilding, panting with rage and exertion.

"Because you are a thief. I heard you arrange with the Caution to rob the safe and fix the blame upon me. I stop you, because you are a thief and a coward, Mr. Wilding."

Wilding made a desperate rush upon Dick.

He was met with a blow from a fist as hard as iron, and fell back against the wall.

Then his manhood failed him.

He saw that he was lost, the prison garb and the hard labor of the jail came like a vision of horror before his shrinking eyes.

Falling on his knees, he held up his hands.

"For God's sake, Lightheart, have mercy on me!" he pleaded.

"Why should I?" asked Dick.

The Bold Warrior had picked himself up, and, armed with a ruler, stood over the unhappy young man, ready to strike him down if he dared to make any further frantic attempts at escape.

"Don't say anything about this night's work," continued Wilding. "Give me a chance. If you only knew how I have been driven."

"I do know," said Dick; "for that reason I will keep this affair dark."

"You will?"

"Yes."

Wilding seized Dick's hand, and was about to raise it to his lips and kiss it.

Dick, however, drew it away.

"Don't do that," he said. "I don't like it; and get up—one man should never kneel to another. Kneel down when you get home, and if you remember any prayers, say them."

"Thank you!—thank you!—thank you!" cried Wilding, delirious almost with joy.

"That will do," said Dick.

"No, it won't. I'll prove my gratitude. I'll show you that I am not the bad-hearted, empty-headed fool you think me."

"I shall be glad to see it."

"You shall see it."

"Go to the governor to-morrow about this money you have lost to the Caution. He will advise you how to act."

"But he'll sack me."

"I don't think so. Bob Smash can't make you pay a gambling debt by law; and the governors are not bad friends to have when you are in a mess."

"I will think it over."

"Clear out! I'm busy. Away you go; and"—

"What?"

"Let this be a lesson to you. Honesty is the best policy, my lad," said Dick.

The Bold Warrior held the door open.

"Is all straight, Jaggs?" asked Dick.

"Yes, sir. I was on to him before he could take the notes out of the safe. He hasn't got the value of a penny piece."

"Muttering a feeble 'Good-night,' Wilding went out into the night.

The Bold Warrior sat down in Mr. Steadyman's chair, and Dick went on with his work.

It was eleven o'clock before he had rectified the error in the accounts.

At last he threw down his pen with an air of triumph.

"That's where the mistake is," he exclaimed.

"Hurrah! Come on, Jaggs; let's lock up."

The Bold Warrior gladly assisted him, and in a few minutes, all was put in order, and Dick locking the office door, they separated at the corner of the square, Dick giving the B. W. a half-crown for his trouble.

"I don't want this, sir," he said.

"Keep it till you do, then," answered Dick; "and mind you don't say anything about Mr. Wilding. If you do, his character's gone, and you might as well put a fellow in the work-

house as turn him up in the city to get his living without a character."

"Unless he turns rogue at once, sir."

"Quite so. Good-night."

Dick hurried away, thinking that Messiter would fancy he was lost, and get anxious about him.

At the refreshment-room of the Metropolitan Railway, in Moorgate Street, he saw some sausage-rolls, and feeling hungry, went in to buy one.

While eating his modest supper, and drinking a glass of beer, his attention was attracted by a couple of gentlemen.

They were sitting at a table near him, drinking champagne.

An empty bottle stood before them, and a fresh one had just been placed on the table by the waiter.

"Surely I know that face," said Dick to himself.

He looked again.

Yes.

He knew the face.

Where had he seen it before?

Suddenly the recollection flashed across him.

"The man who insulted Floss Silk! The swell who wanted to get her into his brougham! By Jove! That's the fellow I propped in the eye."

As Dick made these mental observations, he turned half round, so as to avoid being observed and recognized in his turn.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK IS SURPRISED AT WHAT HE HEARS.

If people will talk about their private business in a public refreshment-room at a railway station, they must not be astonished at any one overhearing their affairs.

Nor can they accuse any one who is standing by of being that mean creature, a listener and eavesdropper.

Dick had a perfect right to stand where he did.

It was not his fault if he overheard the conversation which ensued between the insulter of Floss Silk and his companion.

"You can dispense with my society and presence in the city, I suppose, for a week or two, Quidcop," said the tall, gentlemanly-looking man.

"Certainly, my lord," was the reply of the business man.

"We started our company well, eh?"

"Excellently," said Mr. Quidcop, rubbing his hands.

"The London General Fresh Winkle, Gratis Pin Supplying, and Warranted Wholesome Mussel Company," ought to go."

"It will go, my lord. We floated it this morning, and in a week the shares will be at a premium."

"Then you can sell mine, and let me have the money," said his lordship.

"Of course, that is understood. By George, how well you did it, my lord," said Mr. Quidcop, smiling.

"Did what?"

"The speech you made. Some of the people at the meeting shed tears when you described the awful state of the poorer portions of the metropolis owing to the want of fresh winkles."

"And warranted wholesome mussels," put in his lordship.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Quidcop.

"Ha, ha!" laughed his lordship, as if tickled by the recollection.

It happened that on that day, Mr. Quidcop, who was a stockbroker and promoter of public companies, had launched at a meeting the new company we have alluded to.

Quidcop was a sharp man of business, well known and appreciated in city circles.

He knew the value of a lord's name on a prospectus, and for that reason he had made the peer who was with him a handsome offer to become chairman of the company.

In future London was to have fresh winkles and warranted wholesome mussels.

"Cut the shop," cried his lordship. "Cut the shop, Quidcop; I'm tired of it."

"Certainly, my lord," said the stockbroker.

"I'm going into the country to-morrow."

"Business or pleasure?"

"A little of both. Fact is," said his lordship, lowering his voice a little, "I've made a big conquest."

"Indeed."

"Lovely little girl going to run away with me."

"Ah!" said Mr. Quidcop, poking his lordship in the ribs facetiously. "Sly dog. Sly dog."

"Well, yes," said his lordship, stroking his mustache complacently, "I flatter myself I can do it."

"You can, my lord, you can. I wish you'd give me the tip. We city men are not in the hunt with you west-end swells."

"Nice little tit this," said his lordship.

"Lady?" inquired Mr. Quidcop.

"Ya'as," said his lordship, with a drawl.

"Young?"

"Quite a child."

"Ah! not long left boarding-school. I see. False marriage and all that sort of thing. Send her back to her friends in a month, ha, ha! You can do it and no mistake."

"Had a little practice, you see," replied the titled villain.

"What about the little milliner you were telling me about?"

"Oh! she will have to wait. Some city cad stopped my game in that quarter. Hit me; did, by Jove."

"No!" said Mr. Quidcop, in utter astonishment.

It seemed impossible that anyone should dare to strike a lord, simply because he insulted a defenseless girl.

"Fact, I assure you, but he ran away like a coward, or I'd have pounded him to a jelly, Quidcop, and broken every bone in the rascal's skin."

"Serve him right, too."

"Tell you what. I'll give you a toast," replied his lordship.

"Aye, do. Success to the London General Fresh Wink!"

"Bother the winkles," interrupted his lordship.

"No, don't do that. It is a stroke of genius. Think of a pint of fresh winkles for the small sum of twopence, with pins supplied gratis by the seller. That's the beauty of the ideas, pins thrown in gratis. It's grand."

"Well, it may be. But it's not the toast I'm going to give you."

"What then?"

"My peerless Henrietta."

Mr. Quidcop raised his glass to his lips and drank enthusiastically to Henrietta.

Dick started as he heard this name.

It was the name of the girl he loved.

Could this unknown peer have seduced the affections of his darling, and persuaded her to elope with him?

If so, what an abyss of misery was before him.

If so, she was false than all fancy fathoms, as Tennyson sings.

But blaming himself for indulging for one moment such an unlikely supposition, he dismissed it from his mind.

It could not be as he had thought.

There were plenty of girls in the world christened Henrietta as well as his own.

"He means some one else," he muttered; "it's all rot to think it's my Henrietta. If it was, I'd—I'd smash him."

"Let's have another toast," said his lordship.

"As many as you like, my lord," answered Mr. Quidcop, subserviently.

"Here is the little milliner. I will give you my pretty Floss Silk; toast her, Quidcop, toast Floss Silk."

"Certainly. Here's the health of pretty Floss Silk," replied the stockbroker.

"She will be the second victim. Henrietta comes first, and after her Floss," said his lordship, as calmly as if he was talking about what he was going to have for his dinner.

Dick had already made himself the champion of Floss Silk, and he could not bear to hear her name mentioned in this infamous manner in a public bar.

He felt it his duty as a man to interfere.

Who was this titled ruffian who spoke so slightly of poor girls who had done nothing whatever to incur his praise or blame?

Should he boldly confront him?

Should he tear the mask from his face, and warn his intended victims?

He would try.

It was a dangerous thing to do, but Dick's young blood was up, and he wasn't afraid of half a dozen lords.

CHAPTER XVI.

"YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, PLEASE."

WITHOUT any further hesitation, Dick approached the table at which his lordship and Mr. Quidcup were sitting.

"Sir," he said, "I have been an unintentional listener to your conversation."

"And what then?" asked Mr. Quidcup.

His lordship put his glass in his eye, and looked insolently at his questioner.

"This person," said Dick, "has imprudently mentioned the name of at least one young lady with whom I am acquainted."

"Well, what then?" said Mr. Quidcup again.

"I want to know who he is, and by what right he dares to talk in the infamous manner he has done?"

"My good fellow are you out of your senses?" asked Mr. Quidcup.

"I don't think so. Are you?"

"Do you know who you are talking to?"

"That is just what I want to get at?"

"Confound your impudence. If you don't go away I'll"—

"His lordship let his glass fall from his eye, and interrupting his friend, said:

"Excuse me, but I would rather you left this young whipper-snapper to me."

"Certainly, my lord," answered Mr. Quidcup, who was in his heart glad to get out of it.

Dick was tall and thickset.

He looked as if he could hit out straight from the shoulder.

Mr. Quidcup knew the inconvenience of a black eye in business.

If a professional man appears in his office with his eye blackened and swollen, his friends immediately put down the circumstance to a drunken row.

It does not tend to improve a man's credit, so he contented himself with watching Dick carefully.

"You and I have met before," said his lordship, on whose face came a dark scowl.

"We have," replied Dick.

"I am not likely to forget it."

"I should think you were not. If a man gets a punch on the head, it generally sticks in his gizzard."

"If you do not quickly clear out of this, I shall be very likely to return the compliment," said his lordship.

"You're welcome to try," said Dick, coolly.

"Get out."

"I shan't."

"Get out, I say," said his lordship, in a loud tone.

"Tell you I shan't; I've as much right here as you have, and I shan't go until you do what I want."

"What is that?"

"Give me your card."

His lordship laughed scornfully.

"I don't give my card to every counter-jumping cad who asks me for it," he replied.

"Oh, don't you?"

"No. Clear out?"

"I don't clear out for every titled snob who tells me to," replied Dick.

They looked at one another fiercely for a few moments.

Dick did not flinch.

"I shall have you turned out by the waiter, or send for the police," said his lordship at length.

"What for?"

"You are insolent, and you annoy me."

Dick took a chair and sat down upon it, a little distance off the table at which Mr. Quidcup and his lordship were drinking their champagne.

"This is a public room," replied Dick; "I defy you to have me turned out. I shall sit here until you go, and if you then do not give me your name, I shall follow you home."

"I decline to have anything further to say to you," said his lordship.

"Your name and address, please?" asked Dick.

His lordship turned his chair round until he had his back towards Dick.

Mr. Quidcup looked uneasy.

He pulled out his watch.

"Quarter to twelve," he said; "time to go."

"Will you come home with me?" asked his lordship.

"Not to-night if you will kindly excuse me. I have had a hard day, and want to turn in between the sheets."

"As you please. I thought we might have a game at cards. Captain Swellcheekie and Sir Ranke Humbuggins will be at my house."

"Your lordship is very good, but my wife will be expecting me."

"Good-night. Take care of yourself and mind the city cads," said his lordship, with a significant glance at Dick.

Mr. Quidcup laughed, and said that there was no danger.

They shook hands, and the prudent projector of the London General Fresh Winkle and Gratis Pin Supplying Company, Limited, took his leave.

His lordship poured out a glass of wine, and sipped it slowly, as if perfectly unconscious of anyone's presence.

In a few minutes the waiter began to put up the shutters.

Twelve o'clock was near.

"Closing time," thought Dick. "I wonder how much longer the beggar means to stop. He's a cool fish, anyhow."

At length his lordship rose, took out his cigar-case, lighted a choice Havannah, buttoned up his coat, cocked his hat a little on one side, and without noticing Dick in the least, prepared to go.

Dick, however, placed himself before him.

"Do you mean to tell me your name?" he asked.

"You have no right to ask it," was the reply.

"But I have a right to find out."

"If you can."

"I mean to try."

"Remember one thing," said his lordship, warningly.

"What?"

"I can give you in charge for annoying me."

"Do it," said Dick.

"Do you dare me to?"

"Yes."

"Stupid boy," said his lordship, more mildly than he had yet spoken. "Take my advice, and go home."

"I certainly shan't until I know who you are."

"What good would that do you?"

"I could expose you."

"For what?"

"Making a dead set at two innocent girls."

The dark frown came over his lordship's face again.

"You will not take advice, eh?" he exclaimed, angrily.

"Not from you."

"Beware."

Dick laughed.

"I'm not afraid of you. Give me in charge." His lordship hesitated.

"You daren't," cried Dick.

"Why?"

"Because you would have to give your name and a reason for charging me. It would all come out in the papers, and spoil your little game."

The frown grew darker.

"I'm respectable, and you're fishy," Dick went on.

His lordship could bear Dick's annoyance no longer.

His seized him by the shoulder, and with an effort of superior strength threw him under the nearest table.

Dick was half stunned for a moment.

But this sensation did not last long.

The dizziness went off, and as it did, he sprang to his feet.

The tall figure was disappearing through the doorway.

He flew after it like lightning.

"No, you don't," he muttered.

The next moment he had jumped up, and knocked his lordship's hat off on the pavement.

A crowd collected.

His lordship raised his umbrella, as if he meant to strike Dick.

"Shame," said several people.

"Hold him tight," said Dick, who by this time was getting excited.

He clung on to his lordship's arm with all his strength.

At this moment a policeman came up.

"Now, then," said the policeman, "move on, some of you."

"I give this young man in charge," said his lordship.

"All right, sir," said the policeman, who collared Dick.

"Let go," said Dick, angrily.

"You be quiet," said the policeman, "or you'll have hassaulted the police in the execution of their duty, and that's serious. Magistrates don't hallow no assaults on the police."

"I've done nothing," replied Dick.

"Keep still; keep still," said one of the crowd; "we'll see you righted."

The mob grew denser every moment.

Just at that hour of the night the public-houses were closing.

The last train was about to start.

Consequently the station was pretty well thronged.

"What's the charge, sir!" demanded the constable. "Did he try to sneak your watch?"

"I don't know," replied his lordship; "he made a sudden and violent attack on me."

"I daresay he's known," said the constable.

"Most likely."

"He looks like an old offender. Do you charge him, sir, with assault and robbery?"

His lordship slipped a sovereign into the policeman's hand without its being remarked.

"I will let him off this time," he said. "Just keep him quiet till I get away from the young ruffian."

"Certainly, sir. Keep still, you young varmint, or I'll rush you in, dash you."

Dick struggled finally to get away from the constable.

But that functionary caught him lower down the arm, and giving him what in police slang is called the "elbow chuck," brought him down on his back on the flags.

In the meantime, the crowd, not knowing what to think, and rather imagining Dick was in the wrong, parted.

His lordship was thus enabled to get away.

A Hansom was passing.

"Hi! cab," he said.

The driver pulled up; he jumped in, and giving an address at Bayswater, was soon driving away down Moorgate Street.

Turning his attention to Dick, the policeman said, "Well of all the aggravatingest viscousest young cubs, if you ain't the out-and-outest."

"Let me go after that villain," cried Dick; "you have no right to detain me."

"Why, you audacious young scamp, didn't the gentleman say as 'ow you'd tried to rob him?"

"If he did, he told a lie."

"Get up and be off home with you. If I see you hanging about 'ere again, so 'elp me bob, I'll run you in sharp."

Dick got up, and shook the dust off his coat. Some Samaritan who was standing by, handed him his hat, which had fallen off in the rough-and-tumble to which he had been subjected.

"Now, my man, I can talk to you," said Dick, with difficulty suppressing his temper.

He was plucky enough.

But he was not quite such a fool as to engage in a hand-to-hand fight with a policeman on duty, in the streets of London.

He knew how that would end.

And he was not ambitious of having to spend a month within the delightful precincts of the city prison at Holloway.

"Go on," said the policeman, "you'd better."

"You've been made a fool of by a titled scoundrel."

"So have you," said the policeman, with a loud laugh.

"Your number is 11002. Very well. I shall make a note of it and report you. Good-night."

Dick walked away, with his feelings very much ruffled indeed.

"Blessed if he ain't an hartful one," muttered the policeman, as the crowd dispersed and he went on with his duty of flashing his lantern against the doors and trying them to see if they were locked.

What annoyed Dick most was to think that his lordship got away.

He had not found out who he was.

There are so many lords in England that it was impossible to trace him.

His only hope was that they might meet again.

He evidently came into the city.

Happy thought!

He had caught the name of Quidcop, which name ought to be in the Directory.

Mr. Quidcop was the promoter of the new London General Fresh Winkle and Gratis Pin Supplying Company.

His lordship was the chairman of it.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick, as he thought of this.

He could ask Mr. Golding in the morning about it.

If his lordship was really chairman of the Fresh Winkle and Gratis Pin Supplying Company, his name would be known in city circles.

When Dick reached the station he found the last train was gone.

"Pleasant," he said to himself, adding "shall I cab it?"

A little consideration determined him to save his money.

The walk in his excited state would do him good.

It was past one when he reached Selina Villas, but Messiter was sitting up for him.

Dick had walked off his excitement, but he looked a little wild.

"What's happened?" asked Messiter.

"Nothing much," replied Dick, putting down his hat.

"Anything up?"

"Have you got anything to drink?" replied Dick, answering one question by another.

"There's some beer in a bottle. That's all."

"Give us hold, there's a good fellow. I feel as if my throat was on fire."

Messiter went to the cupboard, took some beer, and handed it to Dick, who drank it eagerly.

When he had quenched his raging thirst, he told his friend all that had occurred.

Messiter sympathized with him, and thought that he had been very badly treated.

But he honored him for what he had done.

He held that Dick was right in fancying that the unknown lord could not have meant that he was going to elope with his Henrietta.

"It would be a body blow to me," said Dick, "if Henrietta was false."

"I don't think it likely," replied Messiter.

"Nor I, though she hasn't written to me for some weeks. I have only had one letter since we have been up here, and that was when we first came."

"There are lots of other Henriettas."

"So there are, but you know, Harry, that she and I have been engaged for nearly four years."

"Well, if she should turn you up, there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and lots of lovely girls waiting for some fellow to ask them to marry."

"If she should be false, I'll hate her as much as I have loved her," said Dick, bitterly.

"Don't condemn her before you know."

"No, I won't. Shall I write to-morrow?"

"I would."

"Yes. There is nothing like being straight-forward."

"All right," replied Dick. "Shall we turn in?"

"The miller has come to me," said Messiter, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

They went to bed, were called by Caxy at the usual time in the morning, and arrived at an early hour at the office.

Dick went up to Mr. Steadyman, who, as usual, was looking over the papers.

"Any news, sir?" he asked.

The only news Mr. Steadyman ever paid much attention to was commercial and monetary.

"Another new company, Lightheart," he replied.

"What's that, sir?"

"The London General Fresh Winkle and Gratis Pin Supplying Company. Capital idea that."

"So I should think, sir."

"Great boon for the poor."

"Yes, sir."

"Famous thing for working people to be supplied with pins to pull them out with gratis."

"Who is the chairman, sir?" asked Dick.

"Chairman?" said Mr. Steadyman, re-adjusting his spectacles, and looking down the column of the city news.

There was a momentary pause.

"Oh, here is the name! Lord Borrowdale. Very good name in city articles," he went on.

"Lord Borrowdale," repeated Dick.

"Yes. He's a director of several companies. Good man for a thing of that sort."

"Thank you, sir."

Dick went to his work, and told Messiter that he had found out the name of the man who had insulted him on the previous night.

Messiter congratulated him on his discovery.

They had not much time or opportunity for talking, as business had to be attended to, and they were short-handed that day.

Wilding had sent a note, excusing himself on the plea of illness.

Dick and Messiter knew what this meant.

The exciting scene of the previous night had been too much for him.

He wanted a day's rest to collect his thoughts, and see what it would be best for him to do.

Thanks to Dick, he was not openly proclaimed a thief.

He was spared the shame and humiliation of standing in the dock on a criminal charge.

If he could only summon up courage enough to shake off the vampires who were destroying him, and cut the acquaintance of Miss de Vere and the Caution, he might yet hold up his head in the city.

At all events, Dick had triumphed over him.

Wilding would not be likely again to say that he was head of the room, and tell Dick to hold his tongue.

When dinner-time came, Dick called Little Sunshine to his side.

"Come and dine with me to-day, young one," he said.

"Thank you very much, Lightheart. I shall be glad," answered the boy.

He had recovered from the melancholy in

which the awful death of his supposed father had plunged him.

Mr. John Golding treated him with great consideration, and if he had not a happy home with the rich merchant who had adopted him, it was a comfortable one.

The police had made no progress in discovering the cowardly murderers of the commercial traveler.

Squirm, the detective, called in and had mysterious chats with Golding Brothers.

Dick lived in hope that something would be done some day.

The three boys walked over to the "Devastation" and had their dinner.

Miss de Vere was very attentive to Dick.

She asked him several questions about Wilding, and seemed much concerned at his absence.

Evidently she had got some inkling of last night's work from the Caution.

"I hope he will be well enough to come here to-morrow," said Miss Agnes de Vere.

"If he takes my tip," replied Dick, "he will cut this shop altogether."

"Why?"

"Because the people he meets here are ruining him."

"Oh! Mr. Lightheart, you are hard," said Agnes, raising her eyebrows.

"I'm an old hand, my dear, though I look so young and innocent; and I know how many beans make five as well as any old soldier of the line."

There was shuffling behind him, and a voice cried, "Who's a-talking about the line?"

It was Jaggs.

"Ah, my Bold Warrior," said Dick, "I believe you can smell me at feeding time."

"Got a pretty good nose that way, sir," answered the Bold Warrior, laughing. "But I've had my sixpenny plate of meat to-day, and only dropped in promiskus, thinking as how you young gents would like to hear something more about the Black Prince."

"Good," replied Dick. "Call for what you like and we'll sit where we are."

In a few brief words the Bold Warrior told Messiter, who had not heard the last installment, how the British had shelled the palace and he had been taken for Amgiad, the Sorcerer of Rangoon.

"Now, sir, we start fair," he remarked.

Little Sunshine seemed much interested in the Bold Warrior, who was to him quite a hero of romance.

His young mind pictured the bronzed and aged veteran bayoneting Russians at Inkerman in the dull gray mist of a November morning.

He fancied he saw him slaying the fierce Sepoys as they clambered through the yawning breach, uttering their fierce war cries.

To him the old soldier was not a mere yarn-spinner, drawing on his invention for his facts, and all for the sake of a glass of grog.

"Well, sir, leastways I should say gentlemen all," began Jaggs, "the Black Prince of Delhi was longing to torture me and see how far my power extended, but he was afraid something would happen to him and his if I was injured by mortal hand, so what do you think the clever old tyrant did?"

"Can't so much as guess," answered Dick.

"He invented an infernal machine."

"What was that?"

"He got a deal board and had four-and-twenty round holes cut in it, and in each hole he caused to be fixed a burning-glass. Know what a burning-glass is?"

"Of course," said Messiter, "every school-boy does. If you hold one to the sun and put it near your hand and get a good focus, won't it make you dance just a little bit?"

"I have burnt a hole in my jacket with one," observed Dick.

"And I have lighted touch-paper in that way," remarked Sunshine.

"That's right," said Jaggs, with a solemn nod of approval. "Well, sir, the Black Prince

of Delhi had me brought from my dungeon to a court where the sun came down a buster.

"I was stripped naked, bound hand and foot, and laid face downward on the ground.

"The machine with the four-and-twenty burning holes was then held by six slaves over my bare back.

"Each hole soon got a focus and I could feel my back blistering up like steam.

"The flesh began to shrivel and burn like old Harry, while I ollerred like old boots and went on a good 'un.

"The Black Prince of Delhi stamped his feet that with delight, for he thought he had rendered powerless the Sorcerer of Rangoon.

"I could bear it no longer.

"Tell him," I said, "that it's all a lie about my being the Sorcerer of Rangoon. I'm only a poor English soldier sent into Delhi as a spy, and if you stop the torture and spare my life, I will give you important information respecting the enemy."

"My words were translated to the Prince, and the infernal machine removed.

"They bore me back to my dungeon in silence, leaving me to endure the most exquisite agony all that day and night.

"I felt that death would be a welcome release.

"And yet I clung to life, though I had little hope to cheer me up.

"What followed baffles description, and makes my flesh creep with horror after all these years."

The clock struck two.

"Time," said Dick.

"Sorry for that, sir," said the Bold Warrior.

"You would have liked to hear the final."

"Perhaps I shall, if I live long enough," answered Dick, with a smile.

"I hope you did not betray your countrymen?" said Little Sunshine.

"Not I, sir," said Jaggs, indignantly. "Lor' bless your innocent young heart, it was only my kid. You'd have kidded them if you'd had those burning-glasses making four-and-twenty holes in your naked skin."

"Stroll on, Jaggs," said Dick, getting up.

"Good-day, sir, and thank you for me. Seen Mr. Wilding?"

"No."

"He's been up to the governor, though."

"Has he? When?"

"During the dinner hour. I saw him go in, when he thought all the other clerks was out."

"He's ashamed of himself, evidently," replied Dick.

When they were walking back to the office, Little Sunshine thanked Dick for his kindness in taking him to dinner.

"Don't say anything about that," said Dick; "you and I are going to be great friends."

"I hope so, Lighthouse."

"I'm sure of it. You must come up with me, and let me introduce you to Floss Silk."

"Who is she?"

"A little milliner I have found out, and if what I suspect is true, she is your sister."

"How nice it would be to have a sister. I feel so lonely sometimes, now I have no relations," said Sunshine, his face lighting up with a glow of pleasure.

"Isn't old Golding kind?"

"Oh, yes. Mr. Golding is all I could expect, but then there is such a distance between us."

"And he makes you feel it, I'll bet," said Dick.

"It is not so much Mr. Golding as the house-keeper and the servants that make me feel that I'm only kept out of charity, and that they think themselves as good as me."

"I see," said Dick; "well, I hope that we shall be able to alter that some day."

"Is Floss Silk pretty?" demanded Sunshine.

"Ask Messiter. He thinks so; don't you, Harry?"

"Shut up," answered Messiter.

"I'll reply for you. She is very pretty, indeed, Sunshine, and you'll love her dearly."

"Do you think she really is my sister?"

"I do, and I mean to prove it if I have any

luck; and when you're a rich lord, Sunshine, you'll ask me to dinner sometimes, and give me a day's shooting."

"If it ever should happen, I can never forget so kind a friend as you, Lighthouse, and all I have should be at your service," said Little Sunshine.

He wrung the hand of his champion and comforter, while the tears of emotion came into his eyes.

They had now reached the office.

Mr. William Golding stopped Dick and said he wanted a word with him.

Drawing him on one side, he exclaimed:

"Wilding has been here, Lighthouse."

"Indeed, sir."

"He has got into trouble over some race, and has explained everything about his affairs to me, and I have pardoned him."

"Glad of that, sir."

"He has faithfully promised never to bet any more."

"If he'll stick to that, he'll do," exclaimed Dick.

"I shall tell the police to speak to this ruf-fian with whom he has been betting, and he will hear no more of the claim."

"That's what I told him, sir, when he spoke to me about it."

"So I have given him a week's holiday to collect himself, and leave me to put his affairs right in his absence."

"That's very kind of you, sir," said Dick; "and all I can say is you're a trump."

"I like to do my best for my young men. I was young once myself, you know, Lighthouse," answered good-hearted Mr. William Golding, with a bright and healthy smile that it did one good to behold.

Dick went again to his work.

A week elapsed, and Wilding returned, an altered man to all outward appearances.

He was quieter and steadier, and Dick remarked that he carefully avoided going into the "Devastation," as if he had made good resolutions during his absence, and was trying to stick to them.

CHAPTER XVII

A DAY OUT.

"HURRAH!" said Messiter, coming into the clerk's room from the outer office a day or two after the events recorded in the last chapter.

Wilding, Jerry Darke, Little Sunshine, and Dick looked up.

"What are you doing all that wild Indian business for?" asked Dick.

Messiter performed a breakdown on the coconut matting.

"Are you off your chump?" asked Dick.

"I've got some good news," said Messiter.

"That is no reason why you should act like a Hottentot after a victory."

"Mr. Lighthouse," said Messiter, with mock gravity. "I'm a respectable city clerk, and if you call me outlandish names, I'll"—

"What will you do?"

"I'll sit on you."

"The punishment would be too great for the offense. Enlighten us as to the cause of this unwonted hilarity," said Dick.

"It's the governor's birthday to-morrow."

"Which one?"

"Mr. John Golding."

"Well?"

"I was informed of the important fact by Mr. William, and when I had heard that it was a birthday, I suggested very mildly that he should make it a holiday."

"What did he say?"

"Golding, Junior, tumbled to it in a moment."

"Is it a holiday?"

"I am proud to say it is. To-morrow business will be suspended in this office," said Messiter.

There was a shout of congratulation.

"Oh! good man," said Dick.

"England expects every man to do his duty,

and I flatter myself I have done mine," said Messiter.

"Let me feel your flesh," said Dick.

They shook hands.

"One cheer for the governor," said Dick.

"Right. Hip, hip, hip, hurrah, hurrah, hu—!"

The door opened suddenly.

"Mr. Steadyman appeared, looking rather angrily at the clerks.

Even Jerry Darke and Wilding had caught the infection.

They were cheering lustily.

Dick was standing on a stool, and swinging his arm round his head.

Little Sunshine was, as Dick expressed it, "going it like boots."

"Hush, silence, gentlemen! Silence, if you please," said the chief clerk.

The noise ceased, as if by magic.

"What is the meaning of this uproar, Wilding? Why do you not keep order in your room? Lighthouse, get down from that stool."

"Yes, sir," said Dick.

"Mr. Golding, sir, has granted us a holiday to-morrow, on account of its being his birthday," said Wilding.

"Oh, indeed, I heard something about it," said Mr. Steadyman, a smile starting on his good-natured countenance.

"We were only giving him a cheer, sir," said Dick.

"That's all very well in the wilds of Africa, Lighthouse," said the chief clerk; "but in a respectable office in the city of London, the clerks of an old established firm must conform to discipline."

"Certainly, sir."

"Be quiet, if you please; and all I can say is, I hope sincerely you will enjoy your holiday, and come back refreshed."

"Thank you, sir," said Wilding.

"Now then, lads, one little 'un for Steadyman. He's a trump," said Dick.

"Hip, hip," began Messiter.

"Silence," shouted Mr. Steadyman. "I'll have this holiday cancelled if you make this disgraceful noise."

"Very sorry, sir, but I quite agree with Lighthouse that you are what he called you," said Wilding.

He was quite altered now in his behavior to Dick, and could not make himself civil enough.

Never could he forget Dick's kindness and generosity on that awful night when the Caution had induced him to rob his employers.

He never went to the "Devastation" now; altogether he had given up the society of Bob Smash and Joe Swindles.

Mr. Golding, Senior, had taken good care that he should not be worried for his losses on the turf, which, as gambling debts, were not recoverable by law.

How long his good resolutions would last was another question.

At present he was repentant and an altered man.

"Go on with your work," said Mr. Steadyman, "and be good boys."

He quitted the room, and the clerks, one and all, settled down again to their several duties.

It was a pleasure to work for Golding Brothers.

The brothers and the chief clerk were uniformly kind to their employees if they behaved themselves properly.

Mr. John Golding was a little tyrannical and vain at times.

But the kindness and good-heartedness of Mr. William Golding was a set-off against his brother's occasional harshness.

When the two clerks got home they found Tom Cooper smoking a meerschaum in the garden.

It was just getting dark. He seemed to be upset.

"Good-evening, Cooper," said Dick, "anything flustered your milk?"

"How are you?" replied Tom. "The fact is, old Caxey has ruffled my feathers."

"How?"

"She's been trying it on."

"In what way?"

"She wants to make a market of me; and it will be your turn next," replied Tom; "the time's come for fires. Last year it used to be sixpence a scuttle for coals. Now she wants to stick on ninepence, because she swears they're so much dearer."

"So they are."

"I've offered her sevenpence halfpenny, and I shan't pay any more for her beastly slates. Come inside, and have a quiet weed," said Tom.

The clerks followed him into his sitting-room, and ringing the bell, Tom said:

"I'll send the old 'un for some beer. What will you have?"

"Bitter six, if it's all the same to you," answered Dick.

"Bet you a bob she'll bring fourpenny and stick to the twopence."

Mrs. Caxey appeared on the threshold.

"What's that you say, Mr. Cooper?" she asked.

"You live out of me, Caxey," replied Cooper; "and if you don't watch it, I shall bring home typhoid fever and settle you."

"You can't do it, Mr. Cooper."

"Caxey. Why, we've got a ward full of typhoid at Guy's, and I've only to bring home something infected and lay it in your bed, and the thing's done."

"You wouldn't 'ave the 'art, Mr. Cooper, to injure me."

"Wouldn't I? What are you going to charge for the coals?"

"Well, sir, you can have 'em for seven-and-a-half, though goodness knows I shall be a loser by them."

"Not you," said Tom. "Cut along and get a pot of bitter six. None of your four ale, Caxey, or I'll drop down on you like a hundred of bricks."

"I never cheated you out of the value of a farthing rushlight, Mr. Cooper, and you ought to be ashamed of saying such things afore my new lodgers."

"Caxey," said Tom.

"Yes, sir."

"What's the bunce?"

"Bunce, sir? I don't know."

"Yes, you do. I'll bring home that typhoid fever if you don't answer me, and if you're not in a club, the parish will have to bury you."

"Oh, sir, don't talk about bringing no fevers home! It quite hupsets me. I think I know what you mean, sir."

"Of course you do."

"Bunce, sir, is what you make over and above what you're entitled to charge."

"That's it. If you get four ale and charge sixpence for it, you get twopence, and that's bunce."

"Yes, sir."

"Now don't you think you're going to get any bunce out of your coals. Be a good girl, Caxey, or I'll set the grinning ones on to you again, as well as the fever."

Mrs. Caxey groaned.

"Where's the money, sir, for the beer?" she said.

"Put it down."

"What, sir?"

"Let it go into the bill. I'm short."

"Oh, Mr. Cooper! You 'ad a registered letter the day before yesterday, and only paid me one pound off the last two months' bills."

"Caxey, you'd better take care," said Tom, raising his hand warningly.

"I don't care. I will speak. I'm being robbed shameful."

"There's a nice case of small-pox up at the hospital," said Tom. "I wonder how Caxey would look if she was much pitted."

"Oh, Mr. Cooper, don't, please don't talk in that horrid way," exclaimed Mrs. Caxey.

"Keep your mouth shut, then, or something dreadful will happen to you," said Tom.

Trembling, partly with rage and partly with fear, Mrs. Caxey went away to get the beer.

"Landladies want managing," remarked Tom, as he poured out the sparkling ale.

"So I see," answered Dick.

"It doesn't do to let your landlady get the upper hand. One must economize in these days, and keep the landladies down."

"Is it expensive to become a medical student?" inquired Dick.

"That depends. You ought to pass your exams. in three years."

"What are the charges?"

"I'm at Guy's, you know. We have, at entering, to give satisfactory testimony as to education and conduct."

"Do you keep up your good conduct?"

"That's another thing. One must shake a loose leg, as the sailors say, sometimes."

"What are the fees?"

"We pay forty pounds for the first year, forty for the second, and twenty for the third, and of course we have to keep ourselves out of doors. My governor isn't rich. He allows me all he can—that's two pounds a week—and pays my fees. So now you know all about it."

"We've got a holiday to-morrow," said Dick.

"Have you," cried Tom, "make the best of it. Let's have a day out. I'll go with you."

"Where?"

"Ever been to the Tower of London?"

"No."

"We'll go then."

"All right, what do you say, Harry?"

"I should like it above all things. I have often wanted to go to the Tower," answered Messiter.

"In the old days," said Tom Cooper, "a visit to the tower was very different to what it is now."

"You mean going in at the traitor's gate, a long imprisonment, or having your head chopped off on the block," replied Dick.

"Just so."

"What's it like now?"

"A pile of buildings surrounded by a dry, old moat, towers and gateways here and there, beefeaters, men in armor in galleries, the crown jewels, etc."

"It's settled then that we go?"

"Certainly."

"I say," replied Messiter, "I asked Little Sunshine to come to breakfast to-morrow, and spend his holiday with us."

"Did you?"

"Yes, you know you wanted him to see Floss Silk and Jenny Cotton."

"So I did."

"I thought it would be a good opportunity."

"Let him come with us," said Dick. "Cooper won't mind, will you Tom?"

"Who's Little Sunshine?"

"A clerk in our office."

"Of course I should be glad to know any friend of your's," replied Cooper; "but I say, young fellow, what about this Floss Silk?"

"She's a little milliner."

"Don't you know it's very wrong for city clerks to run after little milliners?"

"I'm engaged. Besides, I don't run after her."

"Tell that to the marines," said Tom Cooper, with a sly laugh.

He told Cooper all about the murder of George Barclay, the adoption of Little Sunshine by Mr. John Golding, with his suspicions of the Caution and Joe Swindles, and his idea that Floss Silk and Little Sunshine were brother and sister, as well as being the daughter of a lord whose brother kept them out of their property.

"This is quite a sensation drama," said Tom.

"I hope my view of the case is the proper one, and the poor children will get their rights in the end," said Dick.

"So do I," replied Tom Cooper.

He smoked in silence for a few moments.

Then he said:

"I've got an idea."

"Hold it tight," answered Dick; "an event

of such rare occurrence ought not to be allowed to slip through your fingers."

"Thank you. None of your chaff."

"What's the idea?" asked Dick.

"Let's take your friends, Miss Floss Silk and Miss Jenny Sunshine."

"Jenny Cotton."

"I beg your pardon. Let's take them with us. I'll escort Jenny, and you shall take Floss."

"What have I done that I should be left out in the cold?" said Messiter.

He appeared rather angry at the suggestion.

"Oh! you shall go with Sunshine," said Tom.

"Thank you, I'd rather not. Dick's got a girl he's engaged to already, and if I take anyone it will be Floss."

"All right," said Dick.

"Cooper may have legs and wings."

"Who's she?" asked Tom.

"That's what Dick calls Jenny."

"Never mind, I like 'em leggy," answered Tom, with a laugh; "who'll go and invite the girls?"

"Let's all go," said Dick.

"Where do they live?"

"Not far off. Round by the Mother Ship-ton. If we're going we must make haste."

The three young men put on their hats and coats as the weather was getting rather chilly.

They went round to the house where the girls lodged, and after a little persuasion induced them to give up their day's work to accompany them for a holiday on the morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOWER OF LONDON.

THE next day little Sunshine came in time for breakfast.

He was introduced to Tom Cooper, who said:

"Good morning, my lord."

Sunshine smiled.

"I can see Lightheart has told you my history," he said. "But it doesn't follow that I shall ever be proved a peer."

"Yes, you will; I've made up my mind about it," said Dick.

"You will be surprised presently young one," said Messiter.

"What at?"

"The girl we suppose to be your sister is going with us to the Tower."

"Shall I be introduced to her? That will be very nice. I can tell directly if I feel like a brother to her," answered Sunshine.

After breakfast they went round to the girls' lodgings and found them dressed and waiting for them.

Sunshine and Floss were somewhat alike in appearance.

"Will your ladyship allow me to introduce his lordship. Not knowing your right names at present I can't call you by them. Let me say Lord and Lady Camden Town," said Tom.

Everybody laughed.

Floss shook Sunshine's hand and said she was very pleased to see him, and hoped that he might really be her brother, as she felt very proud of him.

"And I love you as a sister already," answered Sunshine. "It is very kind of Lightheart to bring us together."

Tom Cooper crept up to them. Raising his hands he put one on each head.

"Bless you, my children," he said, in a deeply pathetic voice.

Then, to the amazement of everybody, he wiped his eyes with his pocket-handkerchief, as if much affected.

"This is truly touching," he added. "My feelings overcome me; to my last hour I shall preserve a pleasing remembrance of the first meeting of Lord Camden Town with his affectionate sister. Amen."

Everybody laughed again, and the girls drew on their gloves.

Offering his arm to Jenny, Tom said:

"May I have the honor of escorting you to the ancient feudal fortress?"

"I shall be most happy," answered Jenny, with a smile.

Messiter had already appropriated Floss, so that Dick and Sunshine brought up the rear.

The train from Chalk Farm station took them to Broad Street, from whence they walked to the Tower.

"I am so glad we have made your acquaintance," said Floss.

"Call it friendship," replied Messiter.

"I am sure that both you and Mr. Lighthouse are our friends."

"We mean to be. I'd do anything for such a pretty girl as you," answered Messiter, with an admiring glance.

"Would you?" answered Floss, with a slight flush.

"Why, I'd—I'd fight a couple of coal-heavers—one down, and the other come on."

Floss laughed.

"What a nice fellow your friend Mr. Cooper is," she said.

"Opinions differ. I don't think so. He's got a way of talking which some people may think funny," answered Messiter.

He began to feel rather jealous of the vivacious Tom.

"What I mean is," said Floss, quickly, "that he's very good company."

"He may be," replied Messiter, in a tone intended to convey the impression that he had his doubts about that even.

"I could never like him so well as you," said Floss.

Messiter's face brightened.

"Well," he said, "after all, I don't mind admitting that Cooper has his good points."

By this time they had reached Tower Hill, and the straggling pile of buildings was before them. They entered the refreshment room at the gate, and the gentlemen treated the ladies to lemonade and Banbury cakes. Jenny laughed and talked, and declared she had never enjoyed herself so much in her life.

The day, for November, was fine. A little cold and frosty, but sunshiny and clear.

Dick took the tickets of admission, and when three or four more people had arrived, a stalwart beefeater told them to follow him, and, heading the procession, led the way to the Tower. As he passed under gateways he paused, and in a monotonous voice explained their historical interest.

They came at last to a long chamber, in which were ranged knights in armor sitting on wonderful wooden horses. They looked as if they were waiting for the trumpet to sound to enter the lists at some tournament to run a tilt to prove their bravery and skill in the eyes of their lady-loves. The beefeater began to give a lecture about the different knights, stating who they were, and what they had done to make them famous.

"This 'ere one," he said, "is the most noble Guy Earl of Warwick, who slew three thousand Saracens with his own hands in the second crusade, and afterwards retired from business, and lived on his means with another man's wife very miserable ever afterwards."

"Lor," said Jenny Cotton, "Don't he look fine?"

"Did they really wear those armor things in the olden times?" asked Floss.

"Oh, yes," replied Tom, "they used to go to bed in them."

"Where's Dick?" asked Messiter.

"I don't know. Haven't seen him lately," said Tom.

"Keep quiet, then," said Messiter, with a wink.

"Why?"

"It's a camel to a weasel he's up to some lark."

"Right," answered Tom, "I'm dumb as an oyster."

Dick had slipped away to the end of the long chamber.

He had a grand idea in his head.

With the utmost quickness he took down the

last knight in the long row. Stripping the armor off the dummy he put it on himself. Hiding the dummy in the corner, he got astride the horse. In one hand he held a long lance, in the other a formidable looking battle-axe.

Holding himself well upright, Dick waited until the little parties of sightseers, preceded by the beefeater, came up to him.

"This 'ere's the last and wust," said the beefeater, pointing to Dick.

"What is his name?" asked Tom Cooper.

"He's Sir Lancelot de Brabazon, sprung of noble hancestors, he disgraced the 'onored name he bore, and descended to facts which 'ave 'anded 'im down to posterity with hignominy and shame."

The mailed warrior raised his battle-axe threateningly.

"What's that?" cried Jenny Cotton.

"What, miss?" asked the beefeater.

"Why, the thing moved."

"What thing, miss?"

"The axe thing that he holds in his hand."

The beefeater laughed scornfully.

"Ha! ha!" he said, "you're trying to 'ave a game along of me, but it won't do, miss."

"It must have been my fancy then," said Jenny.

"Certain sure," answered the beefeater, "this 'ere knight's been dead a thousand years. It's only his armour put on a straw-stuffed dummy, so 'ow could he move?"

"That's reasonable enough," said Tom.

"Well," continued the beefeater, "this 'ere pertickler Sir Lancelot is said in the records of 'istory to have married six sisters, each of whom as he grew tired of 'em he threw into a cauldron of boiling oil, but the vengeance of 'evin hovertook him and he was justly murdered by the huncle of the young women to 'ose hears the 'orrid news had come."

Just as the beefeater had concluded this catalogue of evil, the knight moved his lance. He thrust it out, caught the beefeater in the region of his stomach, and sent him rolling up against the wall.

"Oh! dear," cried Jenny Cotton, "it's alive."

"It certainly moved that time," said Tom Cooper, puzzled.

"Oh! lord bless us and save us," said the beefeater, rubbing his stomach. "Ho! say a prayer, some on you, I'm that frit, mortal frit, that I could sink down through the earth."

"I always thought this old tower was haunted, and now I know it," said Messiter solemnly.

"Aunted, sir?" repeated the beefeater,

"Yes."

"That's what some o' my comrades say, but I never believed it haunted until now. Ho! ho! Lord protect us."

This fresh exclamation was caused by the knight descending from his mettlesome steed. His warlike armor clanked as he trod the floor. Casting aside his lance, he flourished his ponderous battle-axe.

"Keep hoff," cried the beefeater; "'old 'im back, gents. He's got murder 'in 'is hancient hey."

"This is a rum caper," exclaimed Tom Cooper.

"Hold your row. I twig," whispered Messiter.

"What?"

"It's Dick."

"Never!"

"It is. I know his tricks.. You'll see 'a lark," replied Messiter.

The two girls rushed into a corner and clung to one another in dire terror.

Little Sunshine stood before them with his fists clenched, as if he meant to defend them with his life. The remainder of the party scattered in all directions with one exception. This was an American, on a visit to England, who had come to see the Tower as one of the principal sights of the old country.

"I guess it's a tall ghost," he said, "I'm death on spirits, from Bourbon whiskey to crusaders, and if this pertickler one will ac-

cept an engagement to lecture in the United States, wal I calculate I'm on to give him a pile of dollars."

Meanwhile Dick advanced menacingly to the wretched warder.

"Lying and contemptible miscreant," he said in a sepulchral voice, "Retract those words."

"Oh! lord, oh! sir, good sir" gasped the beefeater.

"Down on your knees," cried Dick.

The man sunk down on his knees and looked very funny in his strange costume as he held up his hands.

"Retract thy falsehoods, slave," cried Dick, "or by'r lady and my knightly honor I swear to cut out thy perjured tongue."

"Don't do that, kind sir; I didn't mean what I said. It was all in the guide book."

"By my halidom, thou deservest to die by this hand."

"Oh! Sir knight! look over it this time, most valient gentleman."

"St. George for merrie England!" said Dick. "This varlet deserves to lose his worthless life."

"It shan't occur again, Sir Lancelot, good Sir Lancelot," pleaded the beefeater.

"The blood of all the Brabazons is roused within me," said Dick, raising his axe again.

"Spare me, spare me," cried the warder.

"Grammercy and s'death," said Dick. "The hound grovels at our feet. Begone, dull slave, and mind how you wag your lying tongue again."

The warder sprang to his feet.

"Begone, I say, or s'blood thou diest!"

Hesitating no longer the beafeater ran as hard as his legs would carry him. He disappeared at the end of the corridor as if a legion of ghosts were after him.

"That's an almighty tall ghost," said the American. "Beg pardon, stranger, but I should like to talk business to you. I reckon you're darned smart."

"Excuse me just now," said Dick, in his natural voice.

"Eh?"

"I've not a moment to lose if I don't want to be locked up and get a month."

"You ain't no ghost after all?" said the Yankee, in a tone of disgust.

"Not much. Harry, lend a hand. Tom, get the dummy out of that corner. Quick. That's your sort."

Tom Cooper, who appreciated the joke, produced the dummy.

"Lay hold," said Dick.

He handed the helmet, the chain shirt, with other pieces of armour to Messiter, and Cooper who with his assistance, helped to dress again he redoubted warrior.

Sir Lancelot de Brabazon was soon himself again.

"Hoist him up," said Dick.

They seated him on the horse, gave him his lance and battle-axe, and no one could tell that he had been moved.

It was all done with a will. They had been as quick as a flash over it.

The Yankee patted Dick on the shoulder.

"You're smart," he said, "tarnation smart. Come to the States, and you'll make a pile. You're too good for this benighted country."

"You won't split?" said Dick.

"Guess that ain't in my line."

The girls were now as much inclined to laugh as they formerly had been to cry.

"Keep quiet all of you, if you don't want to get me in a row," said Dick, as an unusual noise was heard at the entrance to the gallery.

The warder was coming back. At his heels were half-a-dozen more. They were all hurrying along as if they were mad.

"Here's a barney," said Tom Cooper.

"Look out for a pantomime," said Messiter.

On came the beefeaters as if some one had given a ghost into their custody, and they had made up their minds to catch the shadowy thing and hold it fast.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SCAVENGER'S DAUGHTER.

When the warders got to the end of the gallery, one said:

"Where is this ghost?"

"That's him," answered the beefeater, pointing to Sir Lancelot.

"He's on the horse again."

"I tell you he comed down and threatened me with his axe. Do you think I can't see. Ask these gentlemen?" replied the obstinate beefeater.

The warders approached Sir Lancelot, and satisfied themselves that he was in his ordinary state.

"I didn't see anything," said Dick, "and it's my opinion the warder is having a lark with you."

"That's it," said one of them. "Come Bill, you've been having a glass this morning."

"Not I."

"Yes, you have. Turn it up and go on with your party or else you'll get the bullet."

The beefeater looked bewildered, rubbed his eyes, pinched his ears, and otherwise conducted himself in an incomprehensible manner.

"I'm blowed if I know what to make of it," he said; "I ain't off my nut, and seeing's believing; but no matter, 'xcuse me, maty, for troublin' of you."

He put himself again at the head of the party, and mumbling to himself, led the way under the Bloody Tower to the regalia. After looking at the jewels the visitors were conducted to another tower where various instruments of torture were collected.

"Come with me, Harry, and explore the antiquities," cried Dick.

"I'm agreeable."

The beefeater had by this time partially recovered his serenity. He pattered away about the rack, the thumb-screw, and the Scavenger's Daughter.

This last instrument of torture was a set of irons made so as to confine the human body in the smallest possible compass.

"When fastened in it, the victim was all of a 'eap," said the warder, "and couldn't 'elp 'isself a little bit."

The description was not a bad one.

"It was frequently used in hancient days, and is said to have been visited by Henry the Eighth, who, as we all know, was a prince of unruly appetites," concluded the warder.

"That's lively," said Dick; "fancy describing the man of many wives as a prince of unruly appetites."

"Rather good, that," said Messiter, who stooped down to examine the instrument.

"It's easily worked," remarked Dick.

"Yes; I wonder what it's like."

"Get in, Harry, and try."

"Get in?"

"Why not?" said Dick.

"All right. Fix me up," answered Messiter.

Dick opened the irons with alacrity.

"Legs in here," he said. "That's it. Arms this way. Now then, prepare to put your nose in your stomach. Easy does it. That's the ticket. Right you are."

Messiter had doubled himself up, and allowed Dick to fasten him in the instrument of torture.

"I'm in now," said Messiter. "Isn't it jolly awkward, though?"

"Find it comfortable?"

"Not at all. Let us out."

"I beg your pardon," said Dick, coolly; "did you speak?"

"Yes; I want to come out," said Messiter, with a gasp and a wheeze.

"Speak louder."

"I can't. Fast in. Can't breathe. I'm flummoxed."

"Hope you like it, Harry," said Dick.

"Not I. Sorry for the poor prisoners in the olden days."

"Well, you won't hurt till the warders come round again," said Dick.

"What?" said Messiter, aghast.

"You're one of the fixtures of the Tower. Good-bye. How are your poor feet?"

"I say, Dick, don't be a fool."

"Never was taken for one yet."

"Let me out."

"Not if I know it. If you were ass enough to go in, you deserve to stop there," said Dick, laughing.

"Do you mean it?"

"Rather. Ta, ta. I'll tell Little Flossy you're comfortable."

"I'll holloa out."

"No good, my boy," replied Dick; "they're all near the door, and you haven't got wind enough to make yourself heard a yard off."

This was true.

Messiter was in such an awfully cramped position, rolled up into a ball as he was by the encircling irons, that his voice was little above a whisper.

"Oh, you brute," he said; "won't I be one with you for this?"

"I wish I'd got a pin to stick into you, Harry," replied Dick.

"You're a nice pal," gasped poor Messiter.

"Who'd have thought you'd have done this?"

"You as good as asked me to screw you up. Why blame me?" answered Dick.

"Anyhow, I'm bested."

"Bye, bye, old fellow. See you again some day," said Dick, waving his hand in an airy manner.

"I say, Dick, don't go. I can't bear it much longer. It's awful being doubled up like this."

"Can't you?"

"'Pon my soul, I can't."

"Do the other thing then. Ta, ta, I'll tell Floss you have married the Scavenger's Daughter," answered Dick.

Messiter groaned.

Dick walked away, but had not gone far before he shouted to Tom Cooper.

"Here! Hi! Cooper, I want you," he said.

"What's up, old son?" replied Cooper.

"Come here."

"All right. Wait a minute."

Presently Cooper and Jenny Cotton walked up.

"There's something wrong with that Scavenger's Daughter," said Dick.

"What?"

"I don't know, but I think somebody's in it."

"Look here," said Tom; "bar ghosts."

"Go and look for yourself," replied Dick.

Tom and Jerry did so, and as they approached the instrument of torture they uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Blow me tight, there's a cove in it," said Cooper.

"Let him out. Why it's Mr. Messiter. Poor thing," said Jenny Cotton, compassionately.

Tom went on his knees, and with some difficulty unfastened the unfortunate captive.

For some moments Messiter could scarcely move. He felt so cramped. When he did get on his pins he burst out laughing.

"If that's torture in the olden time," he said, "I'm glad I live in the modern."

"Who did it?" asked Tom.

"Dick did; and when I come across him I've a good mind to give him a friendly punch," said Messiter.

"It's a great shame," observed Jenny.

"But you did look funny, huddled up in that thing. No one could help laughing, and if I were you I shouldn't quarrel with Mr. Light-heart."

"What," said Messiter, "quarrel with Dick; quarrel with my best and dearest friend. Not I, Miss Jenny."

"That's right."

"He might play me a dozen tricks, and I wouldn't howl over them. You don't know what I and Dick have gone through together, and been to each other."

"Indeed," said Jenny, in reply to Messiter.

"We were at school at Brighton, where Dick saved me many a hiding," said Dick. "We've been to sea together, explored Africa, seen Livingstone, and done heaps of things."

"Shake hands, Harry," said Dick, coming up. Messiter laughed.

"All right, old fellow," he replied.

"You're not riled?"

"Only a little bit. I'll be one with you some day. I owe it you, mind."

"It'll keep, dear boy," said Dick, patronizingly.

There was no opportunity for playing any more tricks at the Tower, so they saw the remainder of the sights peaceably.

Then they got into a steamboat at the Swan Pier, and went to Greenwich.

All had a good run down the hill in the park. After which they had tea and shrimps and bread and butter for ninepence ahead.

Messiter and Floss got quite friendly, and even Little Sunshine's spirits rose to such a pitch that he felt desirous of dancing a jig on the hearth-rug.

They returned to town by rail, and saw the girls home. Tom Cooper told Dick confidentially that he never saw a girl he liked better than Jenny Cotton.

Messiter dreamed that night of a kiss that he stole from Floss behind the door.

Altogether it was a very jolly day.

Before he went to bed, Dick was very busy in a corner.

"What's your game?" asked Messiter.

"Setting mouse-traps."

"Have you caught any more?"

"I've got sixteen now," said Dick, looking into a large cage.

"By Jove! what a lot you have caught; the whole family I should think, grandfathers, uncles and aunts. What are you going to do with them?"

"I don't exactly know."

"They're eating their heads off," exclaimed Messiter.

"That's a fact," replied Dick. "Never mind. I'll have a lark with them to-morrow."

"How?"

"I'll take them to business," answered Dick, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

Messiter asked no more questions; he was tired, so taking his candle he went to bed.

Dick soon followed his example.

CHAPTER XX.

MR. STEADYMAN IS HASTY.

THERE was a strange scratching and running about sort of noise in Dick's desk at the office all the next morning. This was occasioned by twenty-two mice in the cage. At dinner-time Dick put the cage under his arm, and he and Messiter started off for the "Devastation."

They were five minutes earlier than usual.

The tavern was not yet crowded. The barmaids, three in number, were lounging behind the bar, waiting calmly for the rush of custom which they knew would come shortly. A few men were standing in front of the counter, sipping gin-and-bitters to give them an appetite for the roast and boiled.

A little door was left half-open in the l. r. This was to allow people connected with the establishment to go in and out of the bar. Dick stooped down. He opened the cage and lo! the two-and-twenty mice ran out. Nimbly they scampered behind the bar. Glad of their liberty, yet frightened to find themselves in a strange place, and in the full glare of the light.

Closing the little door, Dick got up, and touching Messiter on the arm, whispered:

"Watch it, Harry."

"What?"

"You'll see. I've played the dickens with the drum."

"Have you, though?"

The barmaids began to move uneasily.

Miss de Vere shook her dress.

"There's something about my feet," she said, in a low voice, to Miss Bella Bruce, another barmaid.

"So there is about mine," was the reply.
 "What can it be?"
 "Beetles," suggested Miss Bruce, mildly.
 "Oh, you nasty thing!" said Miss de Vere.
 "Oh, oh! It's on my stockings!" cried Bella. "It's creeping up."
 "I feel it too. It's on my knee, oh! What can it be?"

Here Miss de Vere looked down.
 "It's mice," she said.
 The mice were not only under her clothes but on them, as they were beginning to run all over the place. Shrieking terribly, Miss de Vere climbed up on the counter. She was careless of bottles and glasses.
 Smash went the sherry. Crash went the Banburys.

"Help, help! I shall die," she cried, loudly.

The other barmaids, who were in a similar plight, added their screams to the hubbub.

The landlord and the potman made their appearance on the scene.

He was greatly scandalized at beholding Miss de Vere's antics.

She seemed to be dancing a fandango on the counter, regardless of the glass.

"What is the meaning of this, miss?" he demanded, sternly.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, kill them!" she said.

"Kill what?"

"The mice," she said, in piteous accents.

Seizing a stick the landlord took in the situation at a glance, and commenced an attack at once. So did Dick. So did everybody in the place.

But the mice being very quick, more damage was done to the crockeryware than anything else.

"I've got him—bang," said Dick.

Instead of hitting a mouse, he smashed a valuable stand for flowers.

Miss de Vere fell into a gentleman's arms, and was laid in strong hysterics on a bench. One other barmaid fainted right off. The third went temporarily mad, and getting into a dinner-lift, was handed up to the kitchen as if she had been dirty plates.

"Better slope now," said Dick.

"I'm agreeable," said Messiter. "One more swipe. Take that, you beggar—whack!"

He had killed a mouse with his stick, but in doing it he smashed off a bit of the marble counter.

The boys got away in the confusion.

It was some time before the place was sufficiently set to rights for business to proceed. The damage done was great. The shock to the barmaids nearly laid them up for the rest of the day. No one could make out where the mice came from. The story got about, however, and if not much trade was done in dinners that day, the proprietors made up for it in drinks.

Dick led the way into another eating-house, where chops and steaks were the principal things provided.

A gridiron was at one end of the room. The cook, with his white apron and cap, holding a pair of tongs, cooked the succulent chop or the juicy steak before your eye.

"Chump-chop for me," said Dick.

"I'll have a steak," said Messiter.

They sat down and watched their dinners cooking.

"Wonderful place the city," said Dick.

"Ah! it is so, sir," said a voice he knew well.

"Jaggs!" he said, regarding the Bold Warrior reproachfully. "How did you smell us out here?"

"Well, I see you come in, sir."

"Don't you think you're a jolly old sponge?"

"I haven't any sort of doubt about it, sir," said the veteran, with a subdued grin.

"I'm glad you own it."

"A tender steak will just suit my complaint to-day, sir, and while it's a-cooking—yes, sir, you can order it if you like, sir, thank you. While it's a cooking, suppose we go on with the Black Prince of Delhi."

"That story is the biggest sell out," said Dick.

"Don't say that, sir."

"You'll never finish it."

"Because I haven't the time. If you'd sit it out, sir, we could get through it in—"

"About a week," suggested Messiter.

"Well, sir, going on night and day we might," said Jaggs.

The impudence of the Bold Warrior was not to be checked. His effrontery was unblushing.

"I believe if I were to have a week of the Black Prince, I should have Delhi on the brain," said Dick.

"And I'm sure I should never survive the affliction," said Messiter.

"That's how you young gents waste the time a-growling and grizzling. What's the use of being on the frizzle?" said the Bold Warrior.

"Well, I'll bear it like a man. Cut on, Jaggs!" said Dick desperately.

"If you recollect," began Jaggs, "I had confessed I was a British spy."

"Yes."

"The prince agreed to spare my life on condition that I betrayed my friends, so I described that part of our position which was the strongest, and said it was the weakest."

"Consequence was that the niggers attacked General Wilson, and got a tarnation bad hiding."

"That improved their sweet temper, I expect," said Dick.

"No, sir, it did not."

"The prince was furious, and it wasn't a question of killing me slick off the nut. The only thing that bothered them was how it was to be done with the greatest cruelty. I was brought before the Black Prince and all the chief rebels in Delhi. You should have seen them fix the eye of hatred and malvolence upon your humble servant. A thousand swords would at a word have leaped from a thousand scabbards and sought my heart. An old priest, however, was to be the arbiter of my destiny, 'Let not his blood be shed!' he cried, shaking his patriarchal head. 'But'—"

Here the Bold Warrior temporarily broke down.

His eyes moistened, and he appeared to be so overcome with the affecting reminiscence, that he found it utterly impossible to proceed.

"Excuse me, gents," he murmured; "my feelings is too much for me."

"Have a pull at this," said Dick.

He pointed to a pot of foaming bitter that the waiter had just supplied him with.

The Bold Warrior drank deeply.

"Ah, sir," he said, as he set the pewter down empty, "that reminds me of hanging."

"Why?"

"Because," he answered, pointing to the empty pot, "I've come to the last drop."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Messiter. "Not so bad for Jaggs."

"I'll proceed now, gents, being refreshed; but the events of that terrible time turned my hair gray in a single night. In the precincts of the palace of the Black Prince was a sacred serpent of the python tribe; an enormous monster. It was kept in a room all to itself, and the priests used to go and worship the scaly brute. Will you believe it, gents, but human ingenuity was so devilish, that I was doomed to be cast to the sacred serpent. The python was to make a meal of me. I was to find a grave in the stomach of a big snake."

"Pleasant that," said Dick.

"How did you like it," asked Messiter.

"Wait a while. 'Bide a wee,' as the Scotch say, sir, and you'll hear all in good time," answered Jaggs.

"When my doom was made known to me, I was fit to drop. I knew it would be no use begging and supplicating the black fiends, so I put a bold face on it, drew myself up 'aughtily and looked defiance at them. The guards seized me, I was borne roughly from the council chamber, and conducted to the gilded cage of the huge python. My heart was in a flutter, for death—a horrible, cruel death—stared me

in the face, and—but here comes the grub, sir. So we'll break off at the python, 'cos I don't want to take away your happetites."

The boys were hungry, and they made no objection to the story being broken off at that particular point.

After dinner they returned to the office.

Mr. Steadyman met Dick at the door.

He seemed very angry.

"Lightheart," he said, "you went into my private room, I believe, this morning."

"I did, sir," said Dick.

He wondered what was coming.

"At the same time I was engaged with the senior partner."

"You were, sir."

"Now, I don't want to be hasty; but no one else went into that room, and the fact is, a bag of gold which was on the table is missing."

Mr. Steadyman spoke under the influence of great excitement.

Dick grew red right up the roots of his hair. Some of the clerks in the outer office could hear what was said. The chief clerk's remarks amounted to an accusation of theft. Knowing his complete innocence of the charge it was more than he could bear.

The clerks put down their pens and regarded him curiously. Some began to talk in whispers.

"Where is that bag of gold?" asked Mr. Steadyman.

"How should I know?" answered Dick, indignantly.

His confusion, his redness, and bearing generally were in Mr. Steadyman's eyes proof of guilt.

"Suspicion points to you. Remember, unhappy boy, that we had a bad character with you."

"Do you mean to accuse me of stealing?" demanded Dick.

"I don't go so far as that. I merely ask you if"—

"Unless you're sure, you have no right to say such a thing before everybody. I won't stop here to be insulted. I'm sorry I ever came to the beastly hole," said Dick.

Hearing his friend's voice raised in anger, Messiter looked out of the room.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Matter? Here's Mr. Steadyman calling me a thief. I won't stand it," said Dick.

"Don't be hasty, Lightheart. I have spoken too plainly, perhaps. Do you swear on your honor that you know nothing about the gold?" said the chief clerk.

"I won't answer you," said Dick.

"If you refuse to speak"—

"I do. It's a gross insult to ask me such a thing. I'll go away at once, and never more darken these doors again."

Messiter had never seen Dick so excited before. He tried to stop him.

"Listen to me," he said.

But Dick shook him off as if he had been a child, and putting his hat on his head, ran from the office as if he was mad.

"Dear me. Where has he gone? Stop him, some one," said Mr. Steadyman.

Several clerks rushed into the square. They were too late. Dick Lightheart was nowhere to be seen, and no one could tell where he had gone.

"Foolish boy," said Mr. Steadyman, in a tone of annoyance.

"I don't think he's foolish at all," said Messiter.

"How dare you speak, sir?" said the chief clerk.

"Lightheart's my friend, and I'll stick up for him."

"I did not mean to accuse him. I am merely asking for information."

"You did it very awkwardly, then."

"Messiter, you are impertinent."

"I can't help it, sir; you as good as called Lightheart a thief."

"Did I?" said Mr. Steadyman in some confusion.

"Ask anybody who heard you."

"I did not mean it in that way; but I sup-

pose he will come back when his temper is over, and then I can explain.

"Not he," said Messiter.

"Will he not?"

"It is not likely. You don't know Dick as well as I do," said Messiter.

At this moment Mr. John Golding came out of his room. In his hand he held something.

"Oh! Mr. Steadyman," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"You have left something on my table."

"Wh-what, sir?" stammered the chief clerk.

"A bag of gold. Better pay it in to the bank, I think."

Mr. Steadyman sank into a chair, as if he was going to have a fit.

"God bless me!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Mr. John Golding.

"To think that I should have done this."

"Are you ill?"

"It will pass by. Let me be. It will pass," said Mr. Steadyman.

"Here, William! Here, William!" cried Mr. John Golding.

The junior partner came out of his room.

"What is the matter?" stammered Mr. William.

"Steadyman's taken ill," said Mr. John.

"Is it anything very serious? because if it is, we ought to have a doctor."

"No, gentlemen; no, thank you kindly," said the chief clerk, recovering himself.

"Are you better?"

"I have done an act of injustice."

"How?" said Mr. John.

"To whom?" asked Mr. William.

"I missed this bag of gold, sir, and did not know I had left it on your table, and knowing Lightheart had been in my room, I hinted that he had taken it."

"You told him flatly he had stolen it," said Messiter, boldly.

"Hush, you must not speak," said John Golding, looking grave.

"Lightheart is my oldest friend, sir, and we have been friends since we were boys at school together."

"Yes, yes, we know that; where is Lightheart?"

"Gone, sir."

"Gone!"

Both the partners echoed this word in blank amazement.

"Gone where?" asked John Golding.

"Nobody knows," said Messiter; "Dick is a rum chap, and it's ten to one he never turns up again."

"You don't mean that?"

"I do, sir; and shouldn't wonder if he shipped in the docks and went to sea again."

"Mr. Steadyman," said John Golding, "I am very much displeased with you."

"It is your right to be so, sir," said the chief clerk, humbly.

"You will oblige me by acting with less haste and more care in future. Consider what might be the fate of that high-spirited boy."

"Brother," said Mr. William Golding, "you echo my sentiments."

"If Lightheart should come back to-day, let him be shown at once into my room," said John Golding.

Business was resumed after this.

Messiter, however, went to work with a heavy heart, for he knew Dick's obstinate nature, and he feared he would do something rash.

The afternoon passed.

Nothing was seen of Dick. When Messiter went home there was no sign of his friend. Never had the room appeared so gloomy.

Next day Messiter anxiously expected Dick's appearance at the office. He did not show up, as was anticipated. Everyone felt sorry for Lightheart, who was regarded as a martyr to official haste by all.

Messiter was the more surprised at hearing nothing from Dick, because he had only a few shillings in his pocket. They kept their joint stock of money in a desk at their lodgings.

Every Saturday morning they took out an equal share, which they determined to make last them all the week.

"When his coin's gone he'll come back. He must give in then," he said to himself.

He telegraphed to Dick's father, who came up to town. The Rev. Mr. Lightheart had seen nothing of him, and was much concerned at his son's disappearance.

"This is very serious," said he.

"It's an unfortunate mistake on the part of Mr. Steadyman," answered Messiter.

"Yes. I consider him to blame; but Richard was a little bit too thin skinned."

"Hasty, you mean."

"Yes," said Mr. Lightheart. "If he had only remained a little while and fought the matter out, it would have been cleared up."

"So it would, sir."

"If you hear anything of him, let me know at once. We are all very anxious about him at home."

"Certainly."

"Knowing Richard as well as I do, I don't think he will come to any harm," said his father.

"Nor I," rejoined Messiter; "but I feel awfully lonely without him."

The Rev. Mr. Lightheart gave Messiter a sovereign, shook his hand warmly, and returned to his parish duties.

Mr. Steadyman was greatly grieved.

He would have given half-a-year's salary if he could recall what had happened.

CHAPTER XXI.

ROUGHING IT IN LONDON.

WHEN Dick quitted Counting-house Square he was acting on impulse, as he had done nearly all his life.

His heart was full of bitterness.

It was very hard to have a stain thrown on his character for nothing.

Pulling his hat over his brows he plunged his hands into his trousers pockets and walked moodily up Cheapside.

He was determined not to go back to Golding Brothers.

But what could he do?

"I'll get another berth," he said to himself.

This was not so easily done as he thought.

He passed by gloomy, though always grand, St. Paul's.

Down Ludgate, up Fleet Street, he stared at the many publishing offices.

In disquiet, he turned down a small street leading to the Embankment.

A gloomy-looking building, half inn, half public house, arrested his attention.

Just at that moment he did not like anything gay, and this tavern seemed to invite him inside by its lonely aspect.

He walked in.

A few seedy men, of the out-of-place, shabby-genteel order, stood at the bar. The ceilings were dirty, the floor dirty, the bar cobwebby, and everything mouldy. The house smelt like a vault, and bore some resemblance to a tomb. Even the barmaid was slattern, as her hair in curl-papers at three in the afternoon, and her heels slipshod testified.

"What's the name of this crib?" said Dick, addressing a young fellow whose week-old paper collar and threadbare coat told a tale of poverty.

This is the refuge for the destitute," was the reply.

"Oh!"

"It's the Cadger's Hotel. Hard up asylum, preparatory school for the workhouse, anything of that sort you like."

"You're chaffing," replied Dick.

"Of course he is," said a voice behind the bar; "what do you want to put the crabs on the house for, Mr. Sloper?"

Let him try for himself, that's all," replied the young man, sulkily.

"What did you please inquire about?" cried the man.

"Are you the landlord?" asked Dick.

"I have the honor to occupy that distinguished position, sir, in the 'Author's Arms.'"

"Can I have a bed here to-night?"

"If you pay for it," put in Sloper.

"Will you be quiet?" said the landlord, raising a pint pot threateningly.

"Go on. Give me some beer and I'll be quiet. I'm not in a good temper to-day, Pullbeer. I've been disappointed."

"Better luck next time, sir," answered Pullbeer, landlord of the "Author's Arms."

Then turning his attention to Dick, he added: "Bed and breakfast, sir, three and six."

"I shall stop here to-night," replied Dick.

"Any dinner, sir? Chop and potatoes one shilling. We do it as reasonable as we can."

"I've dined. Give me some beer and the paper."

Mr. Pullbeer complied with this request, and favored his customer with another gracious smile, as he was new to the house; and had a watchchain conspicuously displayed over his waistcoat.

For some minutes Dick read the paper vacantly.

The young man, called Sloper by the landlord, said:

"Excuse me for interrupting you."

"Don't mention it," replied Dick, kindly, as if he felt he should like to speak to some one.

"You're a stranger here. Are you on the press?"

"No. I've been in the city, but I've thrown up my berth, and"—

"Been out long?"

"Only to-day," replied Dick.

"What brought you here?"

"Fate, I suppose. I wandered about, and wanting to get out of the crowd, strolled down the first quiet street I could see. Is there anything wrong about the house?"

"Oh, no," answered Sloper; "I often put up here when I'm out of luck. My only reason for not liking the place is, that everybody is as poor as myself, and Pullbeer won't give a halfporth of credit."

"You asked me what I was," said Dick; "may I put the same question to you?"

"By all means. I'm a shorthand writer, and got the sack from Gurney's the other day for getting drunk and missing an appointment."

"Sorry for you," said Dick.

"Oh, I don't want your sorrow or anybody else's."

"I didn't mean an offense."

"Thanks, all the same. As one makes one's bed, so one must lie on it," replied Sloper sadly.

"Where there's shame, there may be reformation," said Dick.

"Shut up preaching," said Sloper angrily.

"I know my fault. I lap, and I can't help it."

After this admission Dick said no more.

It was easy to see that Mr. Sloper was one of the victims of intemperance. About thirty years of age, he looked forty, was out of employment, nearly penniless, and ragged—all through drink.

Dick stayed that night, and for ten days in succession at the "Author's Arms." He had to take his watch to a pawnbroker's to obtain money to live upon.

Pullbeer kept short accounts, on the principle of short reckonings making long friends. Every night he exacted the money from his customers before they were allowed to go to bed.

Day after day Dick answered advertisements in the daily papers. Plenty of clerks were wanted but some employers required a premium. Others asked for a reference to his last place, which, for obvious reasons, he did not give them.

At last all his money was gone. He only had sixpence left as he entered the "Author's Arms," after a weary tramping to Kensington, where he had been after a berth.

Sloper extended his hand as he saw him.
 "Got anything yet?" he asked.
 "No; have you?" said Dick.
 "I expect a job to-morrow. A religious paper wants some sermons taken down—one morning, the other evening—and I shall get a quid for the two."

"Glad to hear it," said Dick, "as for me, I am slanted clean out, bar a little sixpence."

"I can't lend you any money," said Sloper, "worse luck; I only had half-a-crown, which I borrowed to-day, and two bob went for bed."

"Will old Pullbeer put me up gratis?"

"Not likely."

"I shall have to mouch a doss," said Dick gloomily.

"Tell you what to do."

"What?"

"Run the blockade."

"How do you do that," inquired Dick.

"Sneak up stairs when no one's looking, creep into bed, pull the clothes over your face, and trust to providence."

"Good," said Dick; "it's better than having the key of the street."

"I'd go back to my old place to-morrow if I were you," said Sloper.

"Never."

"What will you do then?"

"Go down to King Street, Westminster," said Dick, biting his lips.

"And enlist?"

"Yes."

"That's a flat game; I'm afraid, but your friends can always buy you out."

"I could get lots of money if I chose to speak for it," said Dick; "but I said I wouldn't, and I won't."

He spoke determinedly.

The worry and trouble he had endured had only made him more resolute and obstinate. He spent his sixpence in some bread and cheese and beer, and waited in the bar talking to Sloper and other acquaintances she had made until it was ten o'clock.

"Now's your time," whispered the shorthand writer.

"Right," said Dick.

"Old Pullbeer's having his supper. Never mind the glim, you ought by this time to know your way up stairs with your eyes shut."

"I do, pretty well."

"Cut along then, and I wish you luck."

Dick wrung his hand, and crept up the dark, creaking stairs which led to the bedrooms.

"He had been sleeping in a double-bedded room, but custom being rather slack, the second had been unoccupied. Creeping into his room, he undressed and got under the clothes. For half an hour he could not sleep through anxiety. It would be very disagreeable if he was found out."

Pullbeer was as hard-hearted as Pharaoh.

Over his bar he had the motto:

"POOR TRUST IS DEAD. WHAT KILLED POOR TRUST? BAD PAY."

Certainly Pullbeer's mercy was not long-enduring.

At length Dick's eyes closed, and he slept the sleep of the just. It might have been about eleven o'clock when he was roused by the sound of voices and footsteps in the corridor.

"I'll put you in here, sir," said the voice of the landlord.

"Thank you," was the reply. "Anywhere will do. I'm not particular."

To Dick's horror they approached his room. The light of a candle appeared.

The next moment Pullbeer himself appeared with a customer.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "What's this?"

Dick quaked.

"Why, bless me!" cried the landlord. "Here's one as ain't paid. I thought he'd ent the shop."

Approaching Dick he flashed the candle in his face.

"Get up," he said, sternly.

"Eh? 'What's up,' do you say?" asked Dick, rubbing his eyes, and pretending not to be awake.

Mr. Pullbeer regarded him with a stern and relentless eye.

A smile of peculiar significance played round his mouth.

"When Pullbeer smiled it was a bad sign."

CHAPTER XXII.

A PARK TROT.

"Look here," said Pullbeer, in his most coarse and brutal tone; "you know my rules?"

"Well," ejaculated Dick.

"But it ain't well."

"What's the matter? Is the house on fire?"

"Matter enough."

"Have you lost sixpence and found a shilling," asked Dick, trying to be jocular, and acting on the principle that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

"No, I haven't."

"What is it, then?"

"Have you parted for your pitch?" asked Pullbeer.

"No, I haven't, but I'll pay you to-morrow."

"I shan't give you the chance. Get up."

"I'm in bed," said Dick.

"That's just where you didn't ought to be. Get up, I say. No nonsense. I don't break my rules for nobody."

"But I've paid you fair and square during the time I've been in your house, and I'll settle up to-morrow."

"That's what they all say," said Pullbeer.

"I'm an old soldier. When you can pay, you're welcome. When you can't, your name's Walker."

As he spoke, he dragged the clothes off Dick, who jumped out of bed in his flannel shirt, looking very angry.

Pullbeer saw the fire in his eye, and stepped back.

"Don't try that game on," he said.

"It would serve you right if I did punch your head, you unfeeling brute," answered Dick.

"That's a matter of opinion, but don't you try it on. I'm bigger than you, and will run you in like a shot if you come any nonsense."

"What!" exclaimed Dick.

"I'll lock you up if you make a disturbance in my house, and I don't suppose that will suit your book."

Dick reflected a moment. It decidedly would not. He had given his name to the landlord when he first came to the house, and he did not care about a police case, which would show the name of Richard Lighthouse up in all the papers.

Seeing that he had conquered, Pullbeer once more assumed his bullying demeanor.

"Now, then," he cried, "on with your togs."

Dick, with a subdued howl of indignation, began to dress himself.

When he was putting on his coat, he said:

"Where am I to go?"

"Go?"

"Yes."

"Do a park trot. It's good for the circulation."

"What's that?"

"Don't you try and come the innocent over me," said Pullbeer, in a tone of contempt.

"I don't understand you."

"You've heard of the parks?"

"Yes."

"Well, they're shut at night, so I don't mean them, but what I do mean is the Mall in St. James's Park. Slope along the Strand, go down the Duke of York's steps, and pitch on a bench."

"You inhuman monster," said Dick, eying him narrowly.

"Don't call me names."

"And you turn me out at the dead of night, when I don't owe you anything."

"It's my rule."

"I hope your rule will bring you to"—

"Get out, I say," interrupted the accomplished and polite proprietor of the "Author's Arms." "I know my business."

"You don't deserve any," said Dick.

"Go and do a park trot, I tell you. It's good for the circulation."

"I shan't forget you," said Dick.

"Go on. What do you think I keep my house for? It isn't for all the idle scamps in London."

"You needn't be brutal. Most men have a heart, and"—

"Heart? What does that bring you to? The workhouse. Now then, clear out, you're a long time dressing. Where's your valet? Ha! ha!"

Dick put on his hat, and with a heavy heart began to descend the stairs.

"Excuse me, sir," said Pullbeer to the new customer, who had been watching the scene with considerable interest.

"Certainly," was the reply.

"You've got the crib to yourself now. Turn in. There's the candle, sir. I must look after this fellow."

"Is he a bad one?"

"Bad un. No name for him, regular scamp; got no money. He'll be sloping into some other room if I don't watch him."

The landlord followed Dick into the passage where the bar was situated.

Sloper was standing there with several others.

When he saw Dick he guessed what had happened.

"Missed your pitch?" he asked.

Dick nodded.

"Got the dirty kick out?"

"Yes."

"It's a shame, but there's no use howling," said Sloper. "Got to try a park trot, I suppose."

Dick was about to answer, when the landlord seized him by the arm and conveyed him to the door.

"This way, please," he said.

"Look here," said Dick: "I'll write to my friends to-morrow, and get a lot of money. I've got some diamonds at home I found in South Africa."

"Stash that sort of patter," said Pullbeer.

"Eh?"

"It won't wash."

"But it's true."

"All right. Perhaps it is. Anyhow it ain't good enough for me. Cut along and try that park trot, it's good for the circulation."

With this he thrust Dick out to the door, and shot back the bolt.

"It's a case now," said Dick to himself.

He walked along into Fleet Street and down the Strand.

Gaily-dressed people were coming out of theaters, getting into cabs and carriages, to go home to oysters, lobsters and champagne.

Putting a stout heart on the matter, Dick trudged along. He had been in a worse plight plenty of times. In Africa, goodness knows, he had put up with privations enough. He had been stricken down with fever. He had wanted food, and had been threatened by wild beasts and cruel savages. Still he felt his position in the heart of London, in the midst of plenty and in a Christian country, more than he had felt anything during his travels.

"It's a hard world," he said, as he walked on; "blessed if a fellow hasn't more chance of getting a living in Africa than he has here, if he gets knocked out of a berth in this country."

There was nothing for it but to go on to the Mall.

Pullbeer had spoken of a park trot. To this gentle exercise Dick was doomed. He thought of going in a cab to his lodgings in Selina Villas, Camden Town, where Messiter would have received him with open arms. But this he could not persuade himself to do.

"No, no," he said, with a shake of the head; "if I give in now, Master Harry would have the laugh at me. I'd rather tramp the streets all night than do it."

Trudging along bravely he came to the Mall. The sky had become overcast, and black heavy clouds rolled overhead, indicating coming rain. All the seats along the Mall were occupied. Some by soldiers locked out of barracks, with women by their sides, some by threadbare half-starved looking clerks and laborers. These unfortunates were trying to sleep as well as they could in their unfortunate position. Coming back near the Duke of York's Column, Dick saw the woodwork used in erecting the stalls, where the cows are kept in the daytime, and milk and buns sold to nursemaids and children.

A happy thought struck him. He would make a nest here.

He arranged the pieces of wood so as to make a tolerable shelter, crawled in, and leaning his head on his arm, went to sleep.

How long he continued in a state of oblivion he did not know. He was roused by a flash of light, and at the same time a harsh voice fell on his ear. Outside his shelter the heavy pattering of falling rain was heard. It had turned out a wet night.

"Come out of that," said the voice.

Dick saw that the light came from a bull's-eye lantern, and the speaker was a policeman.

"I'm doing no harm," answered Dick, sleepily.

"You've got to come out, or I'll run you in, and you'll get fourteen days as a rogue and vagabond."

Dick reflected.

Mr. Steadyman had called him a rogue, and certainly he was a vagabond, or there is nothing in words.

"Let me stop," he said, plaintively.

The constable's answer was to seize him by the leg and haul him out.

"Now, then, tramp," he said.

"Where to?" asked Dick.

"What's that to me?" was the reply.

Heaving a deep and bitter sigh at the cruel laws and inhumanity of his fellow-man, Dick pulled up his coat collar, and walked out into the pelting rain. Ere he had got into Waterloo Place he was completely soaked through and through. It was one of those steady, penetrating downfalls that wet a man to the skin almost before he is aware of it.

Time, a little after one. Streets deserted and looking very uninviting. Dick strolled up Regent Street, and took refuge in a doorway. His heart was very full, and he felt inclined to cry.

A cab went by.

"Hi!" exclaimed Dick.

"Where do you want to go?" asked the driver.

"Selina Villas, Camden Town," answered Dick, who made up his mind to go back to Messiter, chaff or no chaff.

"You look like paying for a cab," replied the driver; "tramp it."

"I'll have your number," cried Dick, angrily.

"That's what you'll have," replied the driver.

He swung his whip round, and hit Dick with the but on the back of the head.

Then he drove off, laughing.

Dick fell half stunned on the pavement, and the pitiless rain played on his upturned face. He lay there for some minutes, after which a man coming along saw him, and dragged him to a lamp-post. This man had a heart. He acted as did the good Samaritan to the one who fell among thieves.

Dick opened his eyes and shut them again, thinking he saw the devil. The man was black. But he was not a devil. Only a negro minstrel, with his banjo under his arm, and his bones in his pocket.

He had been singing and playing outside an oyster-shop in the Haymarket till one o'clock, when all the places were closed.

He lived in a small room in a narrow street close to Golden Square, and was going home.

"Rouse up, mate!" he exclaimed.

"I'm hurt," answered Dick; "let me die!"

"Not you. Come home with me. You shall have half my bed, and you'll lie dry till morning."

"What?" exclaimed Dick, staggering to his feet; "will you take me in?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe you," said Dick, whose faith in humanity was shaken.

"Come and try me. Don't look skeared. I'm only Banjo Bob, the nigger."

Dick collected his senses.

"Give me your arm," he said. "I'm weak and faint."

Banjo Bob had a quatern of rum in a bottle. A drop of rum in some milk did his throat and chest good in the morning, after so much singing.

"Take a pull of this," said he.

Dick put his lips to it, and felt better.

"That's your sort. Step out and tell us all about it," cried Banjo Bob.

As they walked along, Dick unburdened his mind, and found a pleasure in relating his troubles. The "nigger" was very kind to him. When they reached his lodging he opened the door with his key, found his candle on the stairs, lighted it, and led the way up to his three-pair-back. Helping Dick to undress he rubbed him down with a towel, lent him a shirt, and Dick got into bed, nestling up against the wall, thinking he had never been in such a jolly bed in his life.

"God bless you!" he said feelingly. "I'll make it up to you some day. God bless you, my friend. Good night."

"Good night," said Banjo Bob; "you'll be all right in the morning."

And Dick went to sleep for the third time that night.

They say there is luck in odd numbers.

Anyhow, he was not disturbed again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BANJO BOB.

Bob was up before Dick in the morning, and as the latter slept so peacefully and soundly, he did not like to wake him. Taking his things down to the landlady, he had them dried before the kitchen fire, saying he had brought his brother home with him. So when Dick woke up, everything was nice and dry and comfortable for him.

Dressing himself after a good wash, he went with Dick into Carnaby Street, where they bought two pieces of fried fish, cold,—two fine "middles" they were, for a penny apiece. A baker's shop supplied them with a twopenny loaf, and going into a coffee-shop, they had two steaming cups of hot coffee, and sat down to eat their breakfast.

"Can you sing?" asked Banjo Bob.

"Yes," said Dick.

"Ever do the bones?"

"Sometimes, at school."

"If you won't go back to your office, will you join me in my business? I want a pal."

"The very thing that would suit me," answered Dick.

So they went back to the lodgings, and Banjo Bob put Dick through his paces.

They sang "Nelly Bly," and "Lucy Long, and then essayed higher flights, like "Down the River," and "Champagne Charley is my name," after which they became sentimental, and "Father, Come Home," "Hard Times," and "Love, Scrumptious Love."

Dick worked the bones very well.

"You'll do with a little practice," said Bob.

"I've got some old togs, stick-up collars, striped pants, old tail-coat, and white hat; rather lumpy, but that don't matter."

Banjo Bob didn't go out that day at all.

He bought a bit of neck of mutton and onions, with which he made a stew in a tin saucepan, and they sat over the fire, drinking half-and-half, singing, and talking.

The next day Dick was well up in the mysteries of lamp-black and made up as a nigger, to his friend's extreme satisfaction.

For a whole week they worked the West-end,

chiefly doing the public and crowded thoroughfares.

Coppers flowed in, and Bob declared that business was good.

At the end of the week he took stock.

"That's the bank," he said, displaying thirty shillings after paying expenses."

"It looks rosy," replied Dick.

It does so. Now you take your share."

"What?"

"Fifteen shillings for you, ditto for me," said Banjo Bob.

"It's all your own. I'll not touch a farthing," said Dick, resolutely.

"You won't."

"Not one. You go on paying ex's; that's all I want."

Banjo Bob saw he was resolute and said no more.

"I wish you'd come down to Counting-house Square," said Dick, after a pause.

"What to do?"

"For a lark. We could strike up a song jus about one o'clock, as the clerks in my old office are coming out. I've written a few words which I'll read you."

"Go on," said Bob.

Dick read him a few lines, which he called "Ye City Clerks and ye False Accusers."

"You see," he continued, "the row will bring old Steadyman out; he won't know me, and I want to find out if his conscience pricks him."

"I'm on like a bird," replied Bob.

The next day they walked down towards the city and reached Counting-house Square as the clock struck one.

Bob began to strike chords on his banjo, showed his white teeth, and made comical noises, which he interspersed with patter.

"Bones," he said.

"What is it, Sambo?" answered Dick.

"Why is a city clerk like de monument?"

"Like de monument?" repeated Dick; "'cos —'cos he wears a white hat."

"Yo go 'long wid your rubbish. Gib it up!"

"Stop a bit, Sambo. 'Cos he nibber does no work."

"See here, nigger," said Bob, angrily; "me and you'll fall out. Why's a city clerk like de monument. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I gib um up," replied Dick.

"That's what you ought to a done before. Now I'll tell you, Bones. It's because he's got a good many steps to go up before he gets to the top. Yah, yah! Had you there, Bones."

"Yes, Sambo, you're a man ob great cultivation," replied Dick.

A small crowd had collected round them.

To Dick's delight he saw Messiter, Jerry Darke, Little Sunshine, and Wilding.

"That's not bad," said Messiter.

"See hyar, Sambo," said Dick; "now I just ask you one little thing."

"You go along, Bones; you can't nx me."

"Answer me dis, Sambo?"

"Well. I'm a-listening."

"There was a haystack on an island," began Dick.

"Island on haystack. Yes. Go on."

"No, no; a haystack on an island, and the water went all round, and there was no bridge."

"No bridge. Yes."

"A donkey came up."

"Ha, ha! yah, yah!" cried Banjo Bob, going into convulsions of laughter.

"What de matter wid you, Sambo?" asked Dick.

"Yah, yah! You said a donkey. Yah!"

"Yes, I did, Sambo; what ob dat?"

"It make me think ob you. Yah, yah, yah!"

There was a general laugh at this.

"Deuced clever, these niggers," said Wilding.

"Yes, they're not far off the mark," replied Messiter.

"Bang up, I think."

"Now, Sambo; 'tention, sar," cried Dick.

Bob drew himself up in military style.

"The owner of the haystack say to the donkey you may eat all that hay, but you must not swim to the island, nor go in a boat, nor get anyone to carry you across."

"Musn't swim, nor go in a boat, nor get carried," said Bob, with a puzzled look.

"That's so," replied Dick; "and now, Sambo, there was de hay, and there was the donkey. Now, what did dat donkey do?"

"I gib it up."

"That's what de other donkey did," said Dick. "Gosh, gosh. It my turn now, nigger."

Instantly the bones begun to rattle and clash, the banjo struck up, and a prelude was played.

When this was over there was a pause.

"Ye City Clerks and ye False Accusers," said Banjo Bob; this is a true tale ob de official life ob de young city gentlemen."

Mr. Steadyman, attracted by the noise, came out.

Business was suspended till two, and seeing the clerks standing by, he did not like to interfere.

At any other time he would have sent the niggers away.

"Come here, sir, plenty of room," said Wilding.

Mr. Steadyman took a place between Wilding and Messiter.

First Bob sang a verse.

Then Dick.

They began to describe a clerk in a city office, who was rashly and falsely accused of dishonesty.

The charge preyed upon his mind and he ran away.

He suffered great privations.

At last Banjo Bob said, "And this was the lamentable end of ye poor clerk:

"He cut his throat with a piece of chalk,
Played on the old banjo.
And stabbed his hat with a kitchen fork,
Play on the old banjo."

"And this," said Dick, "was the awful fate of the false accuser:

"Rheumatiz seized on his wicked back,
For getting of this youth the sack,
Play on the old banjo.
He couldn't work, not a little bit,
And died at last in a drunken fit,
Play on the old banjo."

Coalbox, gentlemen. Dick and Bob together, with pantomimic action:

"Yah, yah! that's the man!
Play on the old banjo
Yah, yah! he's the man!
Play on the old banjo.
Oh, isn't this a pretty go!
Devil's drag him down below
While we play on the old banjo."

Every time they exclaimed "that's the man!" they bent their bodies and extended their arms towards Mr. Steadyman.

The song being over, they did a walk round, after which Banjo Bob went round with his hat for the half-pence.

Suddenly there was a commotion.

Mr. Steadyman had fallen on his back, and was breathing heavily.

His eyes were fixed and glassy.

He was in a fit.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I'LL SWEAR THAT'S DICK."

THE sudden indisposition of Mr. Steadyman rather interfered with the crop of coppers, which, owing to the new excitement, was not quite so plentiful as Banjo Bob could wish.

Dick saw what had happened. His shot had told. Mr. Steadyman's conscience did prick him. In an instant he was sorry for what he had done. Rushing to the spot, he contemplated the sick man. His face was growing black, and he was in imminent danger of being suffocated, thanks to the ignorance of sanitary laws displayed by the bystanders.

Putting his bones in his pocket, and his resentment also, Dick obeyed the impulse of the moment.

He sank on his knees, and wrenched open Mr. Steadyman's collar.

This gave the man air, which was the very thing he stood most in need of.

He gasped for air, and the lungs began to do their functions once more.

Getting up, he waved back the gaping crowd.

"Stand back!" he cried. "Do you want to kill the man? Lend me your banjo, Bob."

Bob gave him the innocent construction of wood and skin.

With a vigorous sweep, Dick got a clear space of twenty feet.

"He'll pull through, now," he exclaimed.

Messiter had watched this proceeding with curiosity and interest.

All at once he exclaimed:

"I'll swear that's Dick!"

"What?" said Harry Wilding.

"That's Dick, I tell you," answered Messiter, clutching him.

"Nonsense."

"It's his voice and manner! you can't deceive me."

"But it's a nigger."

"A white man with his face blackened, you mean."

Messiter went up to Dick and touched his arm.

"Coppers, sir! yes, sir, thank you," said Dick.

Messiter was not to be denied.

"Coppers be blowed!" he said. "You're Dick Lighthouse."

"Haven't the honor of the gentleman's acquaintance."

"I'll swear you're Dick."

"Swear away!" said that young gentleman.

"But arn't you Dick?" asked Messiter, puzzled, in spite of his conviction.

"Come round to the D., and I'll talk to you," said Dick, lowering his voice.

"Eh?"

"Don't make a song here."

"Right. Let's feel your flesh once more, old man," said Messiter, highly delighted.

"Turn it up. I don't want to be recognized like this."

Messiter was silent.

Dick made a sign to Banjo Bob, and the two discreetly retired from the square.

"Well," said Wilding, "was it Dick?"

"No; I was sold," said Messiter.

"Thought so. That young man has made a hole in the water by this time."

"You oughtn't to get cock-a-hoop over it, if he has," said Messiter.

"I owe him a good turn; but we can do without him," said Wilding.

"Then all I can say is, you're an ungrateful cur, and the next time you try to steal your employer's money, I hope you'll get lagged."

Wilding didn't like this slap in the face, and he slunk away.

Messiter knew too much for him.

Mr. Steadyman began to recover, and was carried into the office.

A glass of cold water was given him, and he became conscious.

"I've been ill, Messiter," he said. "You saw me fall down."

"Yes, sir."

"It is over now," said Steadyman, with a deep sigh.

"Glad of it, sir," said Messiter.

"Have those negro minstrels gone? If not, give them half-a-crown, and tell them never to come here again."

"If you give me the money, sir, I'll hand it to them with your orders."

Mr. Steadyman parted with the half-crown, and Messiter went off to the "Devastation," where Dick and Banjo Bob were coining money.

The house was full, and the customers paid their pennies freely in return for the minstrelsy.

Dick was singing:

"I'm Gumbo Squash with my bressed grin,
My curlin' hair, and my ebo' skin.
De King ob Hearts am cum to de ball,
Let the gals look out for dare 'feckshuns all.
Lubbly Rosa, Sambo come!
Don't you hear de banjo?
Tum-tum-tum."

"How you feel, darkey?" asked Banjo Bob.

"Me," replied Dick; "just as solid as a saw log."

"How dat, darkey?"

"Guess I see the gen'lman eat, and I reckon the sight makes me the biggest toad in the puddle."

"This nigger not like you, Bones," said Bob.

"Why so, Sambo?"

"Calc'late you might tie me in a knot like an eel, I'm so empty. I feel mean enough to steal a nigger and eat him."

"Yah, yah!" laughed Dick.

They did a walk round, and at the door Dick saw Messiter.

This time he made no disguise.

He held out his hand, and said:

"How do, Harry? come in the other compartment, and we shall be quieter."

"Won't your friend come?"

"Presently. He's after the coin, and we can't afford to lose a chance. We're poor."

"Poor!"

"If we were city clerks, of course it would be different."

"Don't chaff, Dick," said Messiter; "I can't stand it. I'm so glad to see you again and know you're all right, that I'm fit to eat you."

"Don't do that, try some mutton; its nicer and cheaper," said Dick, "and more come-at-able."

"What are you going to have, old man?" said Messiter, laughing.

"Porter."

"Really?"

"Yes. It's good for the voice, and cheap. A pint of porter's only twopence, and a pot's threepence-halfpenny in your own jugs."

"You're becoming economical."

"Obliged to study economy," said Dick; "we're so jolly poor."

"Stash it! Tell us all your adventures."

They sat down in a small compartment, which they had nearly to themselves. Dick told Messiter what had happened to him. When he had finished, he said:

"And now, Harry, tell me what I'm dying to know."

"What's that?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Pretty well. You mean, did they find that gold?"

"Yes," said Dick, eagerly.

"They did almost the moment after you had gone."

"Thank God!"

Dick heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Steadyman had left it on the senior partner's table."

"I'm so glad my character's cleared," said poor Dick.

"What a flat you were not to come to me."

"I didn't like to, with that charge hanging over my head."

"Your governor's been up after you."

"Has he?"

"Yes. We must telegraph to him; he's in an awful fright about you," said Messiter.

"Poor old boy. I'm glad someone cares for me. It's nice to be cared for."

"You'll cut this lay, won't you?" inquired Messiter.

"What! turn up being nigger?"

"Yes."

"I suppose I must, though I don't care about coming back to the mill."

"Think of your friends, and your future prospects, Dick."

"Well, I'll work it out to-day, and come up home to-night," replied Dick.

"That's right, old man," said Messiter, shaking his hand again.

Dick took a draught of porter, and an idea struck him.

"See if the Bold Warrior is on the other

side of the bar," he said; "if he is, bring him in."

"I think I saw him there," replied Messiter.

He went round, and finding Jaggs, asked him to come round and have a drink.

The Commissionaire did so.

Looking at Dick, he exclaimed.

"I can't abear niggers. Ever since I was in Delhi, I've hated them."

"Give us the finish of the story, Jaggs," said Messiter.

"No, sir. I'm waiting for Mr. Lightheart's return."

"You'll never see him again," said Dick.

"How do you know?" asked Jaggs.

"He's dead. I saw it in the papers. Drowned himself, I think," replied Dick.

"Did he, indeed?" said the Bold Warrior.

"I don't know that it wasn't the best thing he could do, he was rather inclined to be wild."

Dick laughed, and roused the Bold Warrior's suspicions.

How should a strolling minstrel know anything about one of Messrs. Goldings' clerk.

"Who are you?" he asked abruptly.

"Don't you know me, Jaggs?" said Dick.

"Why, bless me! It cannot be. Why, yes, it is. I knew you all along, sir; and what made you go larking in this fashion?"

"Injustice," answered Dick: "I shall be myself again to-morrow, and I'll spin you a yarn, Jaggs. At present business calls me."

He wished Messiter good-bye, and rejoined Banjo Bob.

They worked their way through the city, back to the West-end, and got home early.

Dick washed himself clean, put on his own clothes, and took leave of Banjo Bob, who was very sorry to lose him.

"I'm your friend, Bob, for life," said Dick; "mind that; there's no half-and-half way about me; what I say I mean."

"Thank you kindly, sir," replied Bob.

"You must come can spare an evening, and mindm you going to make you a present of a new banjo."

Bob promised to come and see Dick before long, and when Dick was gone, he felt too sad to go out that evening, so he stayed at home, smoking his pipe and thinking.

"It's like my luck," he muttered; "I never get a good pal, but I'm sure to lose him."

Messiter, Tom Cooper, and Mrs. Caxey received Dick at the door with open arms.

"Bless his 'art, he's come back," said Mrs. Caxey. "Oh, his poor dear ma. Oh, his poor sufferin' pa."

"You old crocodile," said Tom; "what are you howling at?"

"To see 'im back, sir, safe and sound."

"Go and do a dive into your regions below," said Tom; "and keep your tears till salt water's scarce, Caxey."

Mrs. Caxey suffered herself to be pushed on one side, and the three men went into the medical student's rooms.

Tom opened his cellar, and produced his last bottle of champagne.

"I can't kill a fatted calf," he said; "but I must show my appreciation of the prodigal's return."

The champagne bubbled in the glasses.

"Here's luck," said Tom, "and now, young gentleman, where have you been, and what have you been a-doin' of?"

Dick told him all his adventures.

"The nigger dodge is good," said Tom. "I must know Banjo Bob, for I have long had an idea of a mechanical bones."

"One of the grinning ones?" asked Dick.

"Just so. Put in a box and made to work to order."

"We'll have a day out together some time or other," said Dick.

"Not a park trot, though," remarked Tom; "I'm full against that."

The next day he presented himself at the office.

Nothing was said about the negro minstrels and the effect their doleful verses had upon Mr. Steadyman.

The senior partner was delighted to see Dick, and insisted upon the chief clerk apologizing to him before every one.

Mr. Steadyman did it with a very good grace.

"My dear boy," he said to Dick, taking his hand, "I am glad to see you back again alive and well."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick.

"And I take this opportunity of publicly expressing my regret that in a moment of thoughtlessness I should have hinted at your connection in any way with the missing bag of gold."

"You can't say any more, sir," said Dick.

"It is all over now, and I shan't think of it again, if you don't."

So the affair was settled satisfactorily, and Dick took his place at the desk again.

As he was going away in the evening, Mr. Golding, junior, stopped him.

"Lightheart," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"My brother and I have decided to make you a present. Take this."

He handed him a piece of crisp, white paper.

"It is a bank note for ten pounds."

"You are too good, sir," said Dick gratefully.

"No, no; you have deserved it, after the unfortunate mistake Mr. Steadyman fell into," answered Mr. William Golding.

Dick pocketed the money and went home a richer man. But this was the use he made of the note. He sent it in a registered letter to Banjo Bob, telling him to spend it in remembrance of the pleasant days they had passed together.

Having posted his letter, Dick took off his boots, put on his slippers, and Mrs. Caxey having brought up tea, he chopped off the top of an egg, buttered some toast, told Messiter to poke up the fire and prepare to make him comfortable for the evening.

Fate, however, had deemed that he should have little peace.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TELEGRAM.

For a few days everything went on smoothly.

Everybody was glad to see Dick back in the office, and he was treated with the utmost kindness, like a spoiled child.

As may be imagined, he did not like Mr. Steadyman any the better for what he had done.

He resolved to pay him out for the suffering he had caused him, whenever he got a chance. An opportunity occurred sooner than he expected.

He had been sent out collecting, and in Thames Street he saw a crowd round a fishmonger's shop.

Boy-like, he pushed in to have a look.

There was on the marble slab an enormous cock lobster. The great black thing was alive, and had not long left his native sea.

"What do you want for that scaly thing?" he asked.

"Three half-crowns," replied the shopman.

"Gve you a dollar and chance it."

"Couldn't take it. Why there's meat enough on it to feed a family of twelve for a week, Sunday included."

"I'll spring a bob," said Dick.

"Say six-and-six," said the fishmonger.

"Done," said Dick.

The lobster was his. He put him in a fishbasket and carried him back to the office.

"Is Mr. Steadyman in his office?" asked Dick.

"Yes," said Wilding; "he's got a bad cold and is going home early. He's only waiting to take your collection."

"What have you got in your bag, Dick?" inquired Messiter.

"A mystery of the deep," said Dick, with a laugh.

He peeped into the chief clerk's room.

Mr. Steadyman was sitting before the fire, and had gone off into a gentle doze. He had a severe attack of influenza.

There were a dozen clerks in the outer office, and turning to them, Dick said:

"I say, you fellows, if I have a lark, you won't split."

"There was a general chorus of 'No.'"

"You haven't seen me."

"All right."

"Mind, I'm out collecting, and haven't come in yet."

The clerks nodded their heads.

Dick, to the great amazement and delight of everyone, took the huge thing out of the basket.

"See this cock lobster?" he said.

"Yes, yes."

"Well, you'll see a game with it directly. Oh, my eye! Won't there be a pantomime?"

He left the outer door of the office open, so as to be able to make his retreat quickly. Then he stole softly into the chief clerk's room.

The clerk's were all on tip-toe with expectation and excitement. Mr. Steadyman was unconscious of his presence. Dick held the lobster by the back with one hand and its claws with the other. Gently he raised the lobster to Mr. Steadyman's face. With the utmost caution he held it up and pinched its smaller claws to make it savage. The creature opened its biggest claw. Dick put it up to the chief clerk's nose. Another nip and the lobster closed its huge claw on the nasal organ of Mr. Steadyman.

Dick flew out of the room and into the square. Getting up on the ledge, he looked in at the open window to see the fun. He had not long to wait. Soon a horrible yell, demoniac and savage was heard. This was followed by another and another.

Mr. Steadyman had rushed frantically from his private room into the office.

The lobster was hanging like grim death to his nose. In vain he tugged at his tail. Fruitless were his yells, his howls, and shrieks, and stampings. The clerks were in convulsions of laughter. Never had anything so funny been seen as the chief clerk's stamping and holloaing, running to and fro, stopping short, barking, and bucking with his head, kicking up his heels, and throwing his long arms wildly about.

In the midst of the hubbub appeared the two partners. When they saw what was the cause of the riot they could not refrain from laughing.

"Mr. Steadyman, what is this, sir?" exclaimed John Golding, with difficulty preserving his countenance.

"Take him off, sir. I believe it's the devil who's got me by the nose," said the chief clerk. "Shake him off."

"I can't. Oh, Lord, help me! What shall I do?"

Mr. John Golding advanced, and said to his brother:

"William, unfasten the thing while I hold him."

The senior partner seized Mr. Steadyman by the arm and held him still.

Mr. William attacked the scaly monster.

His efforts were in vain.

"It won't come," he said. "I think it's a fixture."

"Nonsense; pull."

"Oh, holy Moses!" cried Mr. Steadyman.

"He'll have my nose off (gasp). Oh, Lord (grunt)."

"Pull away, brother," said Mr. John.

"It's all very well to say pull," cried Mr. William.

"Tickle him up a bit."

"He's all scales, and won't be tickled."

"Bring a knife, someone," said Mr. John, with a happy thought. "Brother William must cut off the claw."

Messiter ran up with a sharp knife.

But the lobster seemed to divine what was going to happen, for he raised his disengaged claw, and seized Mr. William Golding by the ear. He had put his head a little too near.

"Oh! by the Lord Harry!" cried Mr. William. "He's go—go—got me by the ear."

He began to dance, just as Mr. Steadyman had been dancing.

Mr. John Golding no sooner beheld this new castastrophe, and saw his brother dancing, than he let go his hold of the chief clerk, and rolling into a chair, he fairly roared with laughter.

All the clerks had now come out, and the office re-echoed with their shouts.

Away went Mr. John, and away went Steadyman after him.

Their heads bumped together.

But they couldn't stop still.

The lobster hurt too much.

Their cries were fearful.

"Go it one; go it, t'other. Hi cockalorum! Gig, gig, gig!" exclaimed Dick from the open window.

"Heaven help me!" moaned Mr. Steadyman.

"Confound the lobster," exclaimed Mr. William. "He'll have my ear off."

"It's your fault," exclaimed Steadyman.

"It isn't," replied Mr. William.

"I say it is."

"I say it isn't. Mind your nose," said Mr. William, furious with pain and indignation.

He drew back his fist, and struck the chief clerk on the head.

The shock was so great as to send Mr. Steadyman reeling up against the wall.

One claw of the lobster had been wrenched out of its socket.

It was the one that had seized the junior partner's ear.

Still the other clung to Mr. Steadyman, who looked the picture of despair.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed Mr. Golding, in a voice of triumph, as the claw fell from his ear.

He put his foot savagely on the offending thing, and ground it into pulp on the floor.

Then he rubbed his ear dolefully.

"Has he bitten a bit off?" he asked.

"No, sir. It's all right, bar the lobe. I think he's gorged that," rejoined Messiter, mischievously.

"Heaven forbid. What should I be without a lobe to my ear?"

Mr. John Golding had recovered from his fit of laughing. He again grasped Mr. Steadyman vigorously.

"Bring the knife," he said.

Messiter at once handed it up.

The chief clerk was again dancing a hornpipe and making his own music.

"Stand still, sir," said the senior partner.

"I can't. You wouldn't stand still with a lobster on your nose," retorted Steadyman, savagely.

"Don't answer me, sir."

"I shall, sir."

"I won't allow it, sir. Be quiet, and I'll let you free."

Mr. Steadyman controlled himself, and came to an anchor. The senior partner grasped the body of the lobster, and prepared to cut off the claw.

But the fish was too wily. He suddenly released the chief clerk's nose, and fastened on to the senior partner's fingers.

It was Mr. John's turn to dance. Swinging his hand up and down, he roared like a bull.

"Cut him off, cut him off; five pounds to the one who cuts him off," he exclaimed.

Mr. Steadyman was holding his injured nose in a muffler made of his handkerchief.

But he said spitefully:

"How do you like it, sir?"

"Yes," said William Golding, "it's your turn now. How do you like it, brother?"

"Botheration seize the reptile," replied Mr. John.

He had approached a desk in the course of his struggles, and dashing the lobster down, smashed the second claw off.

He was free, but the pain made him continue to dance.

Steadyman was holding his muffled nose, Mr. William was holding his ear, also muffled, and Mr. John was shaking his pinched fingers.

In time they recovered themselves a little.

The chief clerk subsided into a limp and moaning caricature of humanity.

But a frown settled on the face of the senior partner.

"How did that lobster come here?" he said.

At this question everyone was silent.

Dick thought it advisable to enter at that moment.

"What's the excitement?" he asked innocently.

"Is that you, Lightheart?" said Mr. John.

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"Out collecting, sir. Here is my collection," he replied, handing in his bag.

"Oh!" said Mr. John, puzzled.

"What's up with Steadyman's nose?" inquired Dick.

"A disgraceful joke has been played in this office, I fear," said Mr. John.

"Some one must have put it on me while I was asleep," said the chief clerk, in a mumbling tone.

"Now who did it?—that's the question," said Mr. John.

No one knew anything about it.

The clerks had seen no one enter the room.

It was a mystery.

"Brother John," said Mr. William.

"Yes, brother William."

"I must take my ear to a doctor, and have it dressed."

"Do so, brother William."

"And I must go to the hospital and have my nose put in splinters. Oh, my poor nose," said Mr. Steadyman.

"You have my permission; take a cab, and I hope you will both speedily recover," said Mr. John. I will foment my injured hand with hot water, and, gentlemen—

The clerks looked up.

"I will pay ten pounds reward for information leading to the discovery of the offender and if I catch him I'll lobster him."

"So I would, sir," said Dick boldly.

"Hold your tongue, Lightheart."

"Can't, sir; it ain't long enough."

"Be silent, I say."

"Yes, sir."

"Is this office a bear garden?" demanded the senior partner, looking round fiercely.

"No, sir, it's too fishy for that," said Dick.

"Go to your room, Lightheart."

"Certainly, sir; anything to oblige a gentleman," said Dick gaily.

"Do you intend to be impertinent, Lightheart?"

"No, sir. But I say, sir."

"What now?"

"Have some turbot for dinner to-day, sir. It will come cheap, as you've had the lobster sauce already."

"I don't want any of your sauce," said Mr. John Golding.

"Then you shan't have any, sir. I never like to force anyone's appetite."

Mr. John lost his temper, and took up a ruler. Dick saw this, and made a bolt into his own room, the said ruler just missing him by about half an inch.

Soon after, the clerks went to dinner.

There was not one among them who would betray Dick, and only one who thought of such a thing.

This was Jerry Darke.

He was a sneak, and would have liked the ten pounds reward. But Dick had a strong arm, and Jerry was afraid of a thrashing.

When Dick got to the "Devastation," he found the Bold Warrior there.

Also he saw Bob Smash.

Being in a merry humor, he said to Bob:

"What! Not lagged yet?"

"You shut up," replied Bob, with a scowl.

"Oh! It'll come, and when you're on the wheel, with a number on your back, I'll come and see you."

"Curse you. Stow your jaw," said Bob.

"Squirm says he'll have you."

The Caution looked fiercely at his tormentor.

"If you don't watch it," he replied, "your turn will come before mine." With this threat on his lips, the Caution walked out of the bar.

"Wonder what he means," thought Dick.

"It's only his blab, sir," said the Bold Warrior.

"It sounded like a threat, though."

"Never mind his clack, sir. Have your grub, and I'll go on with the Black Prince of Delhi."

Messiter and Dick sat down with the Bold Warrior between them.

"Jugged hare and taters for me," said Dick.

"Pork and greens, miss," said the Bold Warrior.

"Fowl and ham, my dear," said Messiter.

Miss de Vere took the orders, supplied the usual half-pints of bitter, and Jaggs began.

"They took me, sir, as I was a-saying, to the cage in which they kept the sacred python. I was more dead than alive. They put me into the cage, shut the door and left me."

"That was a go, and no mistake," said Dick.

"How did you feel?" asked Messiter.

"Dickey, sir."

"That's the word," remarked Dick.

"The snake, sir, was the biggest as ever I see. He lay coiled up in a corner, and seemed as big as a bullock. My hair riz, and the cold shivers come over me, though it was over 120 Fahrenheit by a little thermometer I always carried in my pocket. The snake was half-asleep."

"He opened one eye as he saw me come in, and gave me a wink, as much as to say:

"White man for dinner. All right, old boy, I'm on like grub presently."

"Gave you a wink," said Dick.

"Yes, sir."

"I didn't know snakes winked."

"They're awful things to wink, sir. It's a way they've got."

"Go on."

"He put out his forked tongue and then he went to sleep again. I sat down and contemplated the position with the eye of terror and the mind of alarm."

"Is that good, sir?"

"First rate," answered Dick.

"Thank you, sir. The only light as come in was through a skylight. The walls was twenty feet high, and there wasn't a stick of furniture in the room."

Miss de Vere supplied the dinners, and Jaggs broke off.

Scarcely had Dick finished his dinner, than a boy from the office came in.

"Mr. Lightheart," he said.

"What is it?"

"I thought as how I should find you here, sir, having of your dinner."

"Well."

"Here is a telegram for you, sir," said the boy.

"All right, hook it," said Dick.

He broke open the message, which was from his sister.

"Cna you come down to us?" she said, "I have bad news for you, but it may not be so bad after all, if you act promptly."

"What the Dickens does this mean?" he said.

"Let's look?" exclaimed Messiter.

He handed him the telegram.

"Curious!" said Messiter, "I should go."

"I will. I'll ask leave and start at once."

Will you pack up some things in my box to-night and send them off to the governor's?"

"With pleasure."

Dick was uneasy and restless.

The Bold Warrior wanted to go on with his story, but Dick was not in the humor to hear it.

He went back to the office, showed Mr. John Golding the telegram, obtained leave to go home, and at once started for the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway.

He caught a train, and was now on his way to Hayward's Heath.

"What's up, I wonder," he said to himself;

"governor ill? No. Henrietta dead? No. Hang me if I can make half a guess."

CHAPTER XXVI

OH! MY DARLING!

THE evening was drawing to a close when Dick arrived at the Hayward's Heath station of the Brighton Railway.

It had been raining all the afternoon, and a dense mist had risen, veiling the landscape in its thick vapor.

A porter at the station recognized him.

Good evening, Mr. Lightheart," he said,

"Oh, Jones! how do?" replied Dick.

"Going home, sir?"

"Yes."

"Want a fly, sir?"

"Please," said Dick.

The porter called a fly, and Dick was driven to the parsonage.

Only his sister, and his mother and father were at home, his brother being absent.

Mr. and Mrs. Lightheart were at church, but Emily remained at home expecting her brother.

The parson favored his parishioners with a special evening service on week-days, and some of the more pious ones attended, though the congregation was never large.

Emily heard the fly grating on the gravel, and guessing it was Dick, came out to meet him.

She kissed him affectionately.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick anxiously.

"Come in, Dick," said Emily.

"Is anything wrong with the old people?"

"No."

"That's a blessing."

He followed her into the drawing-room, where a cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and the lamp on the table showed a pleasant light around.

"Now, Emmy, out with it."

"I never should have believed it of her," said Emily.

"Who?"

"Henrietta."

Dick's heart beat faster.

"I knew you were very fond of her, Dick," said Emily. "But do you love her now as much as ever?"

"Yes," he gasped, gulping down a lump which rose in his throat.

"How sorry I am for that."

"What has she done?" asked Dick, as firmly as he could.

"Gone off—eloped."

"With whom?"

"A Lord Borrowdale."

Dick started as if some one had put a knife into him.

It was as he had suspected all along.

The Henrietta of whom Lord Borrowdale had spoken that night at the Moorgate Street station of the Metropolitan Railway, was, after all, his own Henrietta.

"Oh! my darling," he muttered, and the shock being too much for him he sank back in a chair, pale and trembling.

Emily was alarmed.

"Are you ill, Richard?" she asked.

For a moment he did not answer, and she thought he was dead.

After a time Richard recovered, and said:

"Give me a glass of wine, if you've got some handy, and I shall be all right presently."

Emily ran to the cheffonier, and gave him what he wanted.

"Now," he said, sitting up, "I can talk to you."

"What do you know about this girl? How long has she been gone? Who told you? Can anything be done to save her?"

"What a lot of questions you ask," said Emily. "All I know is, that Henrietta was staying with her people at Brighton."

"Brighton. Go on," said Dick, speaking in a stony voice.

"She and I were always great friends, ever since we were at school at Miss Bodmin's."

"Yes."

"We used to write to each other three or four times a week, and lately Henrietta has been telling me about a handsome man, named Lord Borrowdale, but I did not expect to get a letter this morning, saying she was going to run away to-day with him."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"Here is her letter."

"She asked me to break the news as gently as possible to you, hoped you'll be happy, and try to forget her, and all that."

"The usual sort of humbug girls have recourse to in such cases," said Dick, bitterly.

"Perhaps Lord Borrowdale is a good match."

"Perhaps," said Dick, sarcastically.

"Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Really?" exclaimed Emily, in surprise.

"He is a titled scoundrel, a villain, an unfeeling West End swell, who ought to be shot!" exclaimed Dick, angrily.

He got up, helped himself to another glass of sherry, and paced the room in an agitated manner.

"Don't excite yourself, dear," said Emma, kindly.

"I feel deeply over this matter, Emmy," said Dick; "owing to my adventures, and what I have seen of the world, I am a man before my time, and I meant honestly, God knows, to make that girl my wife, and place my future happiness in her hands."

"It is very hard."

"It is hard. Harder than you think."

He forced back a tear, but the moisture would come into his eyes, to make him see surrounding objects mistily, and with gathering indistinctness.

"Let me alone for a little while," he said presently.

Emily smoothed back his hair, and kissed his forehead affectionately.

She was going to the door, and he called her back.

"Emmy."

"Well, dear?"

"You can stop. I won't worry about a girl who doesn't deserve it. I'll tear her out of my heart at once," he said.

"That's right, Dick."

"When will the governor be home?"

"Presently."

She sat by his side and tried to cheer him, acting the part of a true sister.

It was a relief to him, however, when his mother and father came back.

They were delighted to see him, and asked him a variety of questions about his city life, and his going away from the office when Mr. Steadyman missed the bag of gold.

This served to turn his mind into another channel.

They sympathized with him about Henrietta. But his mother crushed him by declaring that she could never have loved him.

"The misfortune is, mother," said Dick, "that I loved her."

"Well, my boy, there are plenty of other girls who will be glad to have a fine, handsome fellow like you."

"Yes, yes," said his father; "you always find as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

"That's all very well," answered Dick, sadly shaking his head; "but I don't think I shall ever love again."

"Stay here for a week, and have some shooting and fishing," said his father.

"Give me a ten-pound note, and I'll go to Brighton for a few days. I shall get on better alone," exclaimed Dick.

The Reverend Mr. Lightheart made no objection to this, and it was arranged that next day Dick should go to Brighton and try and pull himself together again.

"Hang that Lord Borrowdale!" said Dick to himself. "The beastly sweep, to go and steal

my girl. But I'll warn him, if ever I meet him! Heigho! I wonder if she'll be happy with him."

When he retired to his room that night he read and re-read Henrietta's letter, which his sister had given him.

"She said:

"Tell poor Dick as gently as you can that I am going to be another man's wife. We are to be married to-day before the registrar, as my future husband, Lord Borrowdale, objects to any public display."

Dick laid down the letter.

"There is some swindle in this," he uttered. "I don't believe he means to marry her at all. He will get some one to act the part of registrar—a servant, perhaps, and then the girl will be thrown on the mercy of the world."

He went on reading.

"I feel now that Dick and I were too young to know each other's minds. He will soon forget me, and, I trust, forgive me. I hope sincerely he will not think me selfish and wordly, for in my heart I firmly believe I have found the man of my choice in Lord Borrowdale."

Dick could read no more.

He crumpled the letter up in his hand, and threw it away in disgust.

The next day he started early for Brighton, and took a lodging in the Old Steyne, determined to go about and enjoy himself, so that he might endeavor, in a whirl of excitement, to forget the girl who had been so false to him.

Lodging in the same house were two ladies.

One was old, and the other young.

It was not long before he found out that they were mother and daughter.

And he made the discovery that the young one was very pretty.

At his age, and in his frame of mind, a young and pretty girl was well calculated to make an impression upon him.

He wanted to be amused.

He was desirous of revenging himself upon Henrietta, and it was necessary to fill the void she had left in his breast.

His friends told him that if he could engage himself to some other girl, he would be showing Henrietta that he was not a sentimental lover to pine and weep because his sweetheart had left him for another.

The young lady used to go and sit upon the beach with a novel, and read under the shelter of the cliff, when the weather was fine enough.

One day Dick happened to meet her on the beach.

He took off his hat politely.

"Good morning," he said. "I think we lodge in the same house."

The young lady bowed stiffly.

"I hope you will not think me rude for speaking to you," said Dick, wishing to force a conversation.

"No," was the laconic answer.

This was some slight encouragement.

"I am so lonely down here," he said.

"Indeed."

"Yes; I do not know a soul in the place."

"Really."

Dick could not get on any further with a young lady who answered him in monosyllables.

He bowed again and walked on.

That evening he went to the theater.

The next day he strolled into the aquarium, and getting tired of that, went on to the same part of the beach where he had met the young lady the day before.

He had forgotten to ask the landlady her name.

Again he bowed.

"Nice day," he said.

"Is it?" was the reply.

"Nice for the time of year, I mean."

"Ah! yes."

"Do you not feel cold here?"

"No."

"Nor lonely?"

"Mamma and I are used to being alone."

"Ah! your father is not living, I presume," said Dick.

"Yes, he is."

"He is abroad, perhaps?"

"No; he was in this town a week ago. I saw him, but did not speak to him."

"Not friendly, eh?"

The young lady blushed deeply.

"I do not know by what right, sir, you ask me questions," she said.

"I beg your pardon," he replied, much embarrassed.

"You are a perfect stranger to me."

"Isn't it odd?" said Dick, "that I feel as if I had known you all my life."

"I cannot return the compliment, sir, nor do I admire its familiarity, or appreciate its impertinence."

She spoke angrily, and getting up, folded up her book and walked stiffly away.

He looked after her blankly.

"Sold again," he said. "I must be jolly clumsy, for instead of making friends I have only succeeded in offending her."

Going home, he sat down in his parlor and rang the bell.

The landlady came up.

"I shall have a chop at home to-day, Mrs. Seaweed," he said.

"Very well, sir."

"That is, if I do not put you to inconvenience."

"No, sir; not at all."

"I suppose you have a good deal of cooking for the lodgers in the drawing-room?"

"They don't give much trouble, sir; the young lady is the amiablest creature as ever lived, and if the mother is a little fidgety at times, she's had her troubles."

"Ah, we all have our troubles," replied Dick, thinking of his own great grief.

"That's true for you, sir," said Mrs. Seaweed.

"What is their name, by the way?"

"The drawing-room, sir!"

"Yes."

"Lady Borrowdale, sir, and the Honorable Miss Alicia Borrowdale."

"What?" cried Dick, in surprise.

Mrs. Seaweed repeated her information.

"I thought Lord Borrowdale was unmarried," he said.

"Married when he was eighteen, sir. Miss Alicia is now eighteen, and he is thirty-five years of age, and hasn't lived with his wife this ten years, the scamp."

"Thank you," said Dick, feeling that he should like to be alone and think.

"What time will you dine, sir?"

"I—I don't dine to-day. I've changed my mind. I'll go out and get some supper, later on."

Mrs. Seaweed said nothing more and retired.

It was a curious thing that the girl he had fixed upon to replace Henrietta should be the daughter of the titled ruffian who had twice crossed his path, and who was his enemy.

Fate had played him a strange trick.

For Henrietta he felt the deepest pity.

She was in the hands of a villain.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW SWEETHEART.

THOUGH he went to the beach again and again, Dick could not see anything of Miss Borrowdale.

He took a walk along the Lewes road.

It was a wild and stormy morning, the east wind howled through the leafless branches of the trees and lashed the sea into fury against the rocky cliffs.

Coming towards him was a young lady.

A glance showed Dick that it was Miss Borrowdale.

They passed one another, and his polite bow was received with a stiff inclination of the head.

It is very difficult in England to make a lady's acquaintance without an introduction.

This truth Dick was beginning to understand.

He wished that some accident might happen and he could rescue her from some great danger.

Then he would have a claim upon her consideration.

Suddenly he heard a cry, and turned sharply around.

The Honorable Miss Borrowdale was flying toward him with all speed, and terror plainly indicated on her countenance.

By the force of the wind her hat had been blown off, and her long, silky, golden hair was flying in wavy masses behind.

At first he was at a loss to account for her precipitate flight.

But he was not kept long in doubt.

She was pursued by a large, fierce-looking bull, which a man had been driving along the road.

Irritated by want of water, and the sharp pricks of a goad, the brute was maddened.

Alicia Borrowdale wore a red cloak, and it is well known that this glaring color will always excite a bull or a cow.

Like many ladies, she had an intense horror and dread of a bull.

Running like the wind, she could not distance her pursuer.

The drover, awakening to a sense of the danger she ran, threw away his short pipe, and started after the bull.

Dick saw that his chance had come.

He carried in his hand a stout stick, and advanced to the infuriated animal.

"Save me! oh, save me!" cried the frightened girl.

"All right," replied Dick. "Get behind me—don't funk; don't be afraid, I mean, and I will do my best."

He waited till the bull came up, and to gore somebody.

His head was lowered, and his cruel horns were sharp and long.

Dick nimbly jumped on one side to avoid his rush, as he had no idea of being hyked.

Then he dextrously caught the bull's tail, and holding on like grim death, began to belabor his flanks with the stick.

The creature bellowed and plunged, darting hither and thither, but Dick stuck to him.

A shower of blows fell upon the brute, who in vain tried to cast off his new enemy.

Fruitless were all his efforts.

The man now came up.

"Hold on to 'un, sir," he cried. "That's your sort, we'll give it 'un, darn 'un skin."

He, too, was armed with a stick, sharp pointed, with an iron tip at the end.

This was called a goad.

Attacking the animal, he struck him on the head between the horns, and soon half-stunned him.

The bull fell on his knees, moaning with pain, while a crimson froth covered his mouth.

"Wo, there," said Dick; "don't kill the beast."

"Better to kill 'un than 'un should kill the young leddie yander," answered the drover.

He desisted from his beating, however, and the bull regained his feet, quivering all over, and looking round him as if he saw stars and didn't like it.

"You be a pluckt 'un, young man," said the drover, admiringly.

"Think so," replied Dick.

"Know lot's as wouldn't a liked to ha' tackled t' bool like that."

"Get a glass of ale and drink my health," said Dick, handing him a coin, "and be more careful in future. Drive on. The lady is in a faint, I think, and it won't improve her to see to the bull when she comes."

"Or right, sir; we'll get along the road, never fear, and thank'ee for me," answered the drover.

He prodded the bull and started him again, he going on quietly now, all the fight being taken out of him by the merciless handling he had received.

Miss Borrowdale was recovering.

She had sunk on the ground, faint and dizzy, but the fresh breeze blowing from the sea revived her, and she sat up.

"Are you better now?" asked Dick, tenderly.

"Much, thanks."

"Will you be strong enough to walk home, or shall I run and procure a fly?"

"Oh, no, I will not trouble you."

"No trouble, quite a pleasure."

"How can I ever thank you sufficiently?" she said, rising, with trembling limbs and a heightened color.

"Don't mention it."

"I shall never forget your brave conduct. Had it not been for you, I must inevitably have been tossed by that dreadful bull."

"I've had a little experience of wild beasts in Central Africa," said Dick; "and they don't usually give me a scare."

"Have you really been in Africa?"

Here was an element of romance, for girls, as a rule, like those men who have traveled and seen the world.

"Oh, yes. I was there with Livingstone," said Dick.

"The great explorer?"

"Yes."

Alicia Borrowdale regarded him with admiration.

"Pray let me offer you my arm, Miss Borrowdale," said Dick. "You look a little nervous."

"Thank you."

She took his arm, and her small, daintily-gloved hand rested lightly on his sleeve.

They walked along slowly, Dick feeling that he did not want any further introduction now.

Accident or fate, call it which you will, had brought those two intimately in contact.

The Honorable Miss Borrowdale presented a singular contrast to Henrietta, being staid and demure, while the latter was vain and frivolous, scarcely knowing her own mind one hour together.

Dick had got a new sweetheart now, and he fancied that the change was for the better.

"May I introduce you to mamma?" asked Alicia.

"Would you like to?" said Dick.

"Oh, so much."

"A day or two ago you seemed so shy of me."

"Then I did not know you, and you had not saved my life."

"Well, I shan't disgrace you, Miss Borrowdale," he said. "My name's Richard; I am the son of the Rev. Mr. Lighthouse, of Ingarstone, near Hayward's Heath. I have been to sea, been abroad, am a clerk in a merchant's office in London, and"—

He hesitated.

"What?" she asked.

"People call me a scapegrace," he said, with a smile.

"And are you?" inquired Alicia, looking up in his face innocently.

"I am fond of fun, and love a lark as well as anyone."

"Oh, there is no great harm in that."

"Now you know all about me," concluded Dick.

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Lighthouse," said Alicia.

"Really."

"Of course. I never say what I do not mean. I should have been glad to speak to you before, but it would not have been proper for a young lady to make a friend of a gentleman without an introduction."

"May I ask you a question?" said Dick.

"Yes."

"It's a rude one."

"Oh, you musn't be rude," said Alicia.

"Have you got a sweetheart?"

Dick was almost frightened at his boldness when he got this out.

"What a question to ask me," she said blushing.

"But you have?"

"N—no. Have you?" she demanded. This was turning the tables on Dick. "I had," he said. "Have you quarrelled with her?" Dick paused a moment before he answered, then he determined to tell the truth at once. It is much the best to be truthful at first starting, it saves so much trouble and many complications afterwards. "A bad man met her and took her away from me," he answered. "Do you know this man?" asked Alicia. She was becoming interested in his love history. "Oh, yes." "What is his name?" "Lord Borrowdale." "My father!" "Yes," answered Dick; "your father has run away with the girl, God help her." And Alicia murmured softly: "God help her." After this they walked on in silence. The ice was broken now.

Presently they began to talk again, and found no embarrassment, talking as if they had been long acquainted. Lady Borrowdale heard from her daughter how Dick had saved her from the bull, and invited him to spend the evening in the drawing-room. Alicia played and sang divinely. Dick was treading on enchanted ground. He stopped a fortnight instead of a week, and felt sorry that he had to go back to business. When he parted with Alicia, it was with a promise that he would write often. "I have a favor to ask you," said Alicia, nervously. "What is it?" "If you meet Lord Borrowdale, you will remember that he is my father." "I was afraid you were going to say that," said Dick. "Mamma and I have no cause to love him, but we cannot forget his relationship to us." "Of course not."

"You will spare him for my sake," pleaded the lovely girl. "I will," said Dick. Beauty had triumphed over hate. He had promised to forego his revenge upon his enemy. Returning to town, Messiter found him in better spirits than he expected, from the tone of the letters he had received from him. The fact was, Dick found that he loved the Honorable Alicia Borrowdale much more than he had ever cared for Henrietta. Boys and girls often have foolish passions for one another. Dick was now a young man, and his new love was likely to be more lasting than the old.

The continuation of the adventures of Dick Lightheart will be found in the sequel, entitled "Dick Lightheart's Victory," which is for sale at all newsdealers.

THE LIFE OF PETER PAD.

A New and Elegant Work on the Life of Our Famous Funny Man,

PETER PAD,

Has Just been Issued. All the Readers of the

WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY

Should have a Copy. An Excellent Portrait of the Above Author can be Obtained with Each Book.

Be Sure You Get One! Price 10 Cents.

For Sale by All Newsdealers or Address

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

Box 2730.

180 William Street, New York.